

# Mexican Life

Mexico's Monthly Review

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OCTOBER, 1951

No. 10, Vol. XXVII



Water Color

MEXICAN MADONNA

By Roy MacNicol

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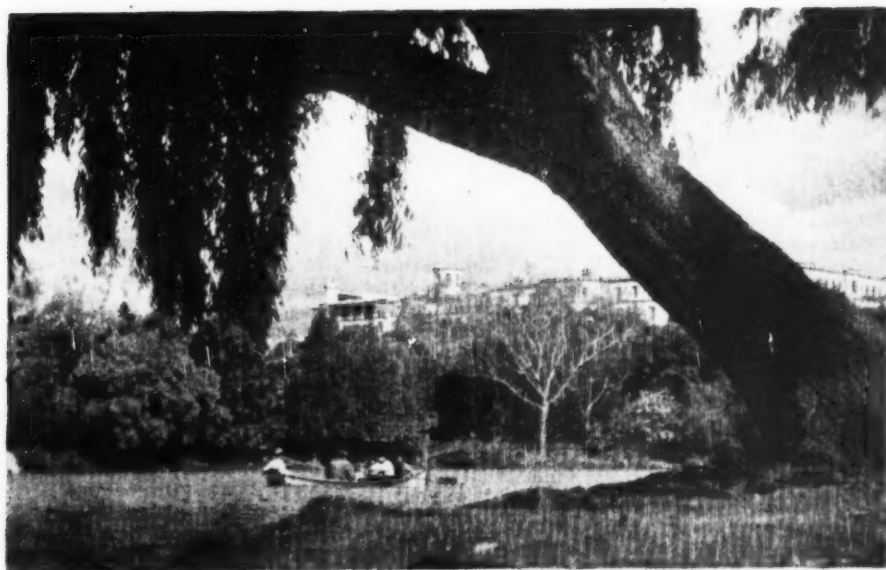
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Mexico's Monthly Review

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HOWARD S. PHILLIPS

EDITOR

## Preserving the Forests

**D**URING the past twenty-five years the major efforts of Mexico's governments have been directed at the aim of increasing agricultural production by means of increasing the national area of tillable soil. These efforts have been centered mainly on the development of numerous hydraulic projects and extensive systems of irrigation, with the net result that approximately five million acres in reclaimed lands have been added to the country's agriculturally productive area. It is worthy of note that almost fifty percent of this total increase has been achieved during the foregone five years by the government of President Alemán.

Thereby Mexico has been able to cope with the problem of producing the food it must have for its rapidly growing population. The production, however, despite its greatly increased volume, has not fully sufficed for the greatly expanded national needs. Hence, a demand exceeding supply has resulted in a continuous inflation in the cost of living—a process which has reduced the purchasing value of the peso to 28 centavos, as compared with the price level of ten years ago.

It is obvious that price inflation cannot be brought to an end until supply catches up with demand. Mexico's economy must evolve from scarcity to abundance through an increased yield of its soil. And while its record in soil reclamation has been truly notable a considerable margin of the agricultural gain it represents has been offset by the loss resulting from widespread soil erosion. Conservation, in other words, has not kept pace with reclamation.

Throughout extensive regions of Mexico hitherto productive lands have become useless because of erosion, or through a process of nature created by man. For it is known that the principal causes of soil erosion are the removal of timber, burning-over the land, breaking up the vegetative soil cover, cultivation of crops on steep slopes, and over-grazing of pasture land. The process may be described in the following words: First the axe, then the plough, then the rain, then erosion, finally the desert. Thus, while on the one hand Mexico has been converting desert wastes into productive soil by means of irrigation, on the other it has been losing formerly productive lands to the desert because of deforestation.

What has happened in Mexico has also happened in other countries. In the United States, the destruction of forests produced the disastrous "dust-bowl" areas of man-made deserts which were eventually reclaimed by reforestation; and Mexico, facing today a similar problem, will have to seek a similar solution. Mexico must replant its destroyed forests and protect

what it still has left, if it is to halt the baleful process of erosion.

Aware of this urgent need, the government has recently formulated a nation-wide program in order to effectively confront this evil. A new and fully empowered department of the Secretariat of Agriculture—the Sub-Secretariat of Forest Resources—has been created by President Alemán for this purpose, and its function is guided by an immediate program and a comprehensive long-range plan. As an initial drastic measure, it has decreed a total prohibition for an indefinite period of timber removal in the states of Colima, Nayarit, Guanajuato and Zacatecas, and in the basins of the rivers Nazas, Conchos, Mayo, Yaqui, Fuerte and Tepalcatepec. It has also cancelled seventy-eight concessions for exploitation of timber lands in different regions of the country. All concessions that have not been revoked stipulate that ten trees must be planted for each cubic meter of timber that is being removed.

Among other measures adapted by the government is the gradual prohibition of the use of charcoal for domestic fuel, which has been mainly responsible for the destruction of forests in the vicinity of cities, and the popularization of tractorline or gas as substitute.

These are the immediate measures for conservation. As regards reforestation, the Federal Government has launched a national campaign with the set goal of planting a minimum of two hundred million trees. To carry out the first phase of this campaign eighty-three million seedlings are being cultivated at this time in sixty-six government and private-owned nurseries, while additional seedlings are being purchased abroad. This campaign is being carried out by means of local organizations, functioning under the supervision of state governments, in cooperation with the Sub-Secretariat of Forest Resources. Through a free distribution of seedlings and sustained educational effort the Federal Government intends to enlist the entire population for the task of planting and conserving trees.

It is obvious that the program formulated by the government cannot bring about a swift solution of the problem. The ultimate success of this program depends, moreover, on the active and wholehearted cooperation of the population at large; and this can be obtained only through extensive educational preparation. The program will not be easy to realize; but it defines the initial step, the first major effort to cope with an urgent national problem of vast proportions.

# Public Scribe

By Sylvia Martin

**R**AFÁEL Viguera's business address is Public Desk Number 1. His office is a stone bench roofed by a giant sabino tree in the plaza. His physical equipment is a rough table which he carries from his home every day, and an obsolete nickel-plated Oliver typewriter which he bought years ago for seventy-five pesos.

Even people who have never learned to write must sometimes send letters or fill out government forms. The public scribe is their common secretary and their confidant. Love and tragedy, illusion and despair, come to sit by him on the stone bench, and in a Spanish that carries the elegance of velvet cloak and starched ruff, he taps out their messages: "Estimable sir... Your attentive and faithful servant."

Rafael Viguera was a government clerk in Puebla. When he fell ill, the doctor told him that he must live in the open air in a mild climate. He traveled to the warm valley of Morelos, bought his typewriter, paid his municipal tax for the privilege of doing business in the plaza, and settled down.

"Menos mal," he says. "Better than being a clerk I make my own hours. I am my own man."

His charges range upward from fifty centavos (six cents). A short business letter is cheap. Filling out an onerous official form comes as high as four or five pesos. He doesn't like this kind work; it takes him back to the cold office in Puebla where he almost coughed his life away.

"Love letters are the best—and profitable too. The cost depends on the art, on the gracefulness of the phrasing, on the depth of the sentiment."

Don Rafael's work is exacting. Delicately he draws out his client to arrive at the correct nuances to be expressed. But he is aloof too, restraining temptations to make him father confessor or judge in a dispute. And he is no gossip-monger. Not from him will you learn that Paula has a lover, or that Jaime's boasted son must be bailed out of disgrace in a distant town.

Mexico's adult literacy campaign has meant, not a decline in his business but a boom, Don Rafael says. Many of the newly taught are not advanced enough to write their own letters, but they can sign their names. With this wonderful new knowledge, they flock to him.

Peasants who never before thought of communicating with absent sons and daughters are suddenly fired with the urge to send letters. And when he reads back what he has written, they, unlike the illiterates, are often critical of his style and language. For them simple elegance must be made baroque. There are long arguments at Desk Number 1, for Don Rafael has his artistic integrity.

Finally satisfied, the new literate's great moment comes—the bold signature that sprawls over half a page, written with a proud flourish in the full public eye.

Don Rafael usually looks half asleep on his stone bench. But he is only thinking.

"I wonder sometimes," he says, "if there are any families living all together. Some families I know are spread over six or seven states. We Mexicans are great wanderers. There must be a restlessness in us, maybe an unease. I wonder why."

His voice trails off. In another moment he will be lost in introspection. With an effort he rouses himself.

"I pick up a few pesos on the side by selling real estate on commission. Now, Señora, if you are looking for a good piece of land..." He lets the sentence die. His heart isn't in it. Don Rafael is not a businessman.

Life flows by Public Desk Number 1—women selling cakes, boy shouting "Paletas!" shoeshiners busy among the gossipers and dozers on the benches, children playing, picturesque tourists staring and being stared at, marketers carrying flapping chickens, baskets, and babies.

There is much to see and think about, and Don Rafael is a thoughtful man.



Water Color.



Texcoco which, in turn, overran its own shallow confines and periodically threatened to submerge its own islands.

The first city—the Aztec Capital—was built originally, in 1325, on two islands, Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco. These islands were precariously situated in the middle of Lake Texcoco, for they were the lowest level of land in the entire valley. Only a travel-weary, land-hungry nomadic tribe would have thought to take possession of them. However, at the time the Aztecs were seeking a refuge from their many enemies. They were a warlike people of bloodthirsty religious habits, shunned by their neighbours, the other, older, inhabitants of Anahuac.

For a time after they settled on the islands, the Aztecs did not engage in agriculture. The flood waters which periodically covered the land did not improve the soil; to the contrary, the saltpetre deposited by them left the earth bleak and sterile. However, the Aztecs lived at first from the produce of fishing and hunting.

This was not true of the other inhabitants of the valley. Some of them lived on what were truly artificial floating islands. A description of them can be found in the histories of Humboldt and Clavijero. Humboldt says that these islands were as a general rule not very large. Usually they were longer than they were wide, and quadrangular in shape.

The procedure was this: First a raft was built of tough native cane. It floated on the surface of the water. Some of the lakebed soil—particularly in the vicinity of Xochimilco—was exceedingly fertile. This kind of soil was scooped up from the bottom of the shallow lagoon and piled atop the cane raft which continued to float. This man-made island had continually to be strengthened or reinforced as it naturally tended to disintegrate. The thickness of the crust of earth sufficed for the roots of the corn which was planted on it. A man built his house, too, upon his own island and usually he added a garden to help beautify the countryside.

If he wanted to move, it was a quite simple matter. "Perhaps," writes Clavijero, "he wished to move away from a creditor, or he didn't like his neighbors. Maybe he wanted to live nearer to a married daughter. It was very easy. He simply got aboard his canoe, tied it with a rope to his island. If he was rich he had his oarsmen do it; if he was poor he did it himself. He propelled his canoe forward and towed his land, his crop of corn, his house and his garden to some other part of the lake."

Fortunate were the Xochimilcoans whose property floated and therefore was not threatened with periodical submersion during the rainy season.

To protect the City of Tenochtitlan from flood, a great dike was built during the reign of the wise King Netzahualcoyotl. This dike encircled the city like a protecting arm all the way from Atzacualco on the East to Ixtapalapa on the southeast. This same dike divided Lake Texcoco into two. The part that contained salt water became known as Lake Texcoco proper. The other part, which surrounded the city, was called, according to old maps, the Laguna de Mexico.

This Indian dike—the Spaniards called it "el albarredon de los Indios"—endured and served its purpose until the year 1555. By that time the proud Tenochtitlan had been destroyed and conquered, and the Spanish Conquistadores had built upon its ruins what they called The Very Noble and Loyal City of Mexico.

Hernan Cortes was warned by his advisers not to rebuild the city on its original site. Coyoacan, Ta-

cubaya and Mixcoac, he was told, were on higher ground and therefore were safer locations for the hub or centre of the new city. Many plans were submitted for the construction of the new capital.

Cortes, however, considered these plans guided by political motives. In order to be able to besiege and conquer Tenochtitlan, he had partially destroyed it. He now completed the work of destruction. Some of the canals that crossed the city were filled in with the debris of ruined buildings.

The Aztec temples were destroyed. The Spaniards intended to relegate the pagan Aztec gods to oblivion, and to build a church on the site of every *teocalli*. The fact of conquest would be proven furthermore if the new Spanish city were built precisely upon the ruins of the vanquished Tenochtitlan.

The native inhabitants were dispossessed. Cortes took possession of "the new and the old" Houses of Moctezuma. He gave to his officers the few other houses which had escaped destruction in that vicinity. The Spaniards promptly shut themselves up in these houses with armed guards at the doors, and the new homes they started to build, had thick fortress-like walls. It was obvious, they did not feel safe.

One of the first structures that went up in the new Plaza Mayor was the gallows, "just as a warning to malecontents, rogues or insurgents."

The new city, whose building was commenced in 1521, was strictly a city for the Spaniards. There was a regulation that the Spanish families resident there, were not even allowed to employ Indian servants. Eventually, however, the latter were brought in, and in the end the population of the city became mixed. At the outset, the Indian population was restricted to the outskirts of the city, where it lived in makeshift hovels in abject poverty.

These slums became "arrabales perdidos" in the terrible flood of 1555, when the old Aztec dike broke. The outskirts of the city were completely covered with water, and death by drowning became all too familiar to the Indians. Whereas well built houses might have withstood the pressure of the flood water, the makeshift hovels fell apart and floated away.

\* \* \*

There was an aged Conquistador who lived in the city, whose name was Francisco Gudiol. It was Gudiol who first conceived the fantastic idea of draining the lakes and emptying the Valley of its 90 square miles of water. He submitted a plan to the Viceroy. Although Gudiol's project was accepted in principle, it was rejected because it was considered prohibitive in cost. Hence, instead of adopting drastic measures, the Spaniards merely repaired the old dike. They also built an additional one, the Dique de San Cristobal. Remains of the latter can be seen to this day. It looks like an old stone wall that runs alongside the Laredo highway, just north of Mexico City, near the present main drainage canal. The flat, dusty land, which surrounds it is a dry lakebed.

In Spanish Colonial times, however, even two dikes proved to be insufficient to hold back the waters of Lake Zumpango. In 1579 there was another flood; in 1607 an even worse disaster. Thousands of Indians died either by drowning, or by being buried under collapsing buildings, or by starvation.

Because the city was still on island, all food had to be brought in by waterway. Sugar, spices, coffee and cocoa beans, grain and fruit were shipped from the Port of Chalco to the Port of San Lazaro. (San Lazaro is today a railway station near the Mexico City

Continued on page 63



Etching.

By Angel Zamarripa.

## The Inspector

By Dane Chondos

**S**ENOR," said Cayetano, pointing to the row of eucalyptus trees that border my land, "we must cut all the branches overhanging the road or we shall be fined."

"Why?"

"Because the Señor Inspector of Roads is coming to the village tomorrow."

All over Ajijic people were lopping and trimming their trees. Machetes of all ages, shapes, and sizes were pressed into service, owners of saws did a brisk business hiring them out, and nimble small boys were everywhere in great demand as tree climbers. The miller wrote a notice on his blackboard in red chalk, saying that he would grind corn free for one week for the family that would undertake to trim his mango trees. Then suddenly all activity stopped.

"What ever shall we do, señor?" said Cayetano. "They say that, with the Señor Inspector of Roads, is also coming the Señor Inspector of Forests, who will fine us for cutting the trees. In many parts of the village they have already cut their trees, but what shall we do, pues?"

"But you can't be fined just for chopping off some branches," I said. "They do it everywhere, to make stakes and posts."

"That yes no, señor. They don't cut off main branches; only someone very closely related to the señor inspector can do that; and once he even fined a compadre with whom he was quarreled."

"Well, what constitutes a main branch?"

Cayetano thought about this for a moment.

"Any big branch, señor, that is to say, any branch that isn't little branch."

This sounded like a racket, and I went round to see Venustiano, now recuperating, to ask him what to do. I found him in the street outside his house sitting very upright in a backless wooden chair.

"Maybe they won't animate themselves to arrive after all," he said. "But who knows?"

"What are you going to do?"

Venustiano considered me for a moment, and then he smiled in the way he does when he is wondering how completely he is going to answer my question.

"I?" he said. "I'm not going to do anything. I know these people. Once, many years ago, they used the same trick. They made a lot of money in a village over there where the uncle of my cousin was living. He was the only man in the whole village they couldn't fine."

"How did he manage?"

"My cousin's uncle was always very ready," said Venustiano. "There were three big guava trees growing just inside the dry wall surrounding his yard, and many of the branches hung right over the wall into the street. Apart from not having any money to pay a fine, he didn't want to cut the branches and lose so much of the crop, for both he and his wife were very fond of guavas, though she liked quinces slightly better."

Venustiano paused. He had been sweating, and he wiped his face carefully on his sarape.

"What did he do?" I asked.

Continued on page 82



Drawing.

By Jose A. Rodriguez.

## Querétaro

By Hudson Strobe

**T**HE CITY OF QUERETARO is doubly notable: for its magnificent eighteenth-century aqueduct and for the execution of Maximilian in 1867. The pale Austrian's death before a firing squad looms out of the chronicles as emphatically as the grandeur of five miles of linked and lofty arches that march across the plain bringing water from the mountains. Today's view of the massive masonry of the aqueduct still draws the attention like a magnet. And one's imagination returns again and again, historically, to the fate of the inept Emperor, whose dramatic end settled forever the question of foreign-sponsored monarchies in the Western Hemisphere.

Like the town of San Miguel de Allende, Querétaro (population, thirty-five thousand) is opulent in atmosphere. In fact, it deservedly ranks high among the half-dozen best colonial cities in Mexico. The district round about is enriched with deep and fertile soil, excellent for crops and stock-raising, and even still dig fortunes out of the neighboring mines. But where San Miguel was a residential pleasure town, since the sixteenth century Querétaro has been a trading and business center. Yet its active churches are

proportionately abundant and more elaborate than those of any Mexican city except Puebla, and its sometime great houses retain their splendid symmetry and their Old World patina, even if they are now inhabited by owners of the textile mills or agents for automobiles.

As we breakfasted, bronze bells tempered with silver swung back and forth in the belfries, calling communicants to mass. Our car had been dropped off at a spot conveniently distant from the station, so that we could look from the windows to the opalescent domes and towers of majolica that reflected the full glory of the Sunday morning sun.

When Esperón, our guide, and I left the car and approached the station along the tracks, three teenage byos, an old man, and two rebozo-draped women emerged to meet us like a reception committee. The left hand of each was outstretched. At first I thought they might be beggars, despite their respectable dress. But objects resting on their outstretched palms glinted in the sun like multicolored fireflies. On neat squares of

dull black paper lay polished opals of various shades and sizes. These persons were venders offering precious stones for sale. We paused briefly and admired. When Esperón said sotto voce that he knew of a family that trafficked in opals, and where the quality could be assured, I shook my head politely. The peddlers did not try to urge or pursue. They smiled politely and moved aside for us to pass.

Querétaro is the center of the opal-mining region, and many of its citizens draw their daily living from the stones, either as owners of mine property, or miners, or lapidaries, or sales agents. The conquistadors did not add opals to their spoils of conquest, for the first stones were not discovered in Mexico until 1835. Like the fellow who plowed up the volcano Parícutin in 1943, a farmer had struck a vein of opaliferous ore that lay just under the surface of his cornpatch. No mines were systematically worked, however, until 1870, three years after the execution of Maximilian.

Though the main part of the town lay at some distance, we declined a cab. It was too fine a day not to walk. The morning was translucent blue and gold, the July atmosphere fresh as May. As we crossed the little square in front of the station, I thought of the Emperor scenting the June air on that morning on which he was to end his earthly adventure. "I could not have chosen a better day on which to die," he had said smilingly to guards who come to escort him to the Hill of Leis.

The way from the station lay along a cobblestoned street, through one of the poorer districts. Already at this morning hour the short blue-green doors of the pulquerías were swinging back and forth as swarthy men in big hats went in to swig pulque, the popular intoxicant of the humble.

"The cotton mills may be short of twenty per cent of the laborers tomorrow," Esperón commented. "It's often so on Mondays. But we can't blame pulque on the Spaniards. The Indians made it and knew drunkenness long before Cortés."

The cultivation of maguey from which pulque is made is among the most lucrative businesses of the region. For generations, proprietors of great estates kept their fortunes by fermenting maguey juice into pulque. With the expropriation and dividing up of the haciendas, there has been some decline, for the new small proprietors are encouraged to let the maguey go and to raise proper foodstuffs.

From the pulquerías that punctuated every other block came the raucous blare of *noiséclos*, another Mexican name for jukebox, like *traga-diezes*, "swallow-dimes."

"Now that importation of modern culture," said Esperón, cavalierly waving a hand toward the noise, "can't be blamed on Spain either. We owe that to you in the United States."

From the window of a private home came a jabbering of human voices on a radio. "And I suppose," I said, "we must take the credit also for this further vulgarization of your way of life."

Esperón grinned in double assent. It was good to be with an alien companion with whom there was such harmony of opinion.

At a street corner we paused to watch two women filling great ollas from a wall hydrant.

"The people drank pulque," Esperón said, remarking the procedure. "because they didn't have good drinking water. Only in the last few years have they had hydrant water in each neighborhood. As you know, more danger lies in Mexican water or milk than in alcoholic pulque. The germs of dysentery of every kind lie in the water, and God knows what-all in the milk. In Mexico, scientific dairying is still virtually non-

existent. And until pure water and clean milk are to be had, a few millions will go on drinking pulque for health's sake as well as pleasure."

We moved aside as a besotted old man staggered out of a joint.

"But pulque is the drink of degradation," Esperón said darkly, "from the beginning of its processing to its conclusive effect. You know how it's made, of course?" He did not wait for me to answer, but went right on.

"My father's cousin owned a pulque ranch, which naturally means fields of cultivated maguey. By moonlight, I think a plantation of maguey is the most beautiful of all growing crops, with its geometric spacing and its silver-green blades sparkling with moonshine. And where part of the acreage is allowed to go to flower, it is extraordinarily lovely by day or night. Each polished green column rises from the heart of the plant to a height of twenty feet, and is crowned with its candelabra of waxy white bells. As far as the eye can see, it's like something out of this world." The Captain heaved a sigh. "But there's no market for the flowers, and to get pulque juice the heart must be carved out of the plant just as the shaft is ready to shoot up into the air. Something like the Persian lamb, you know, that must be ripped from the ewe's womb at the psychological moment for its commercial value. So with the maguey."

"The Indians have an uncanny insight into just the day this birth is to begin. Into the scooped-out place where the flower and stem substance was, liquid begins to flow, and the plant gradually bleeds to death. The white-green heart is stuck on one of the plant's own bayonets—as a sign to the gatherers that there is honey in the bowl. The death process takes as long as two months, and as the plant expires, it pours some five or six quarters of liquid into the cavity every day. Men suck the stuff through a long tube into a pigskin container. Then it is carried to the sheds. From pigskin, the honey water goes into the hairy side of a bull's hide, for fermentation. This process is hastened by adding some pints of rank, yeasty mother of pulque, with potato parings and other garbage."

Esperón made a grimace of disgust and shrugged eloquently. "Naturally, the taste for pulque has to be cultivated."

"But," I said, "isn't pulque supposed to have virtues in vitamins, which the people can't get in a diet of tortillas and beans?"

"That's what the makers claim." He gave me a knowing look. "But you will notice that in the sections where they don't drink it, people thrive just the same."

We had come out of the poorer section into a street with weatherdimmed escutcheons over doorways, and glimpses of cool green patios through grilled gates.

"I notice a lot of them are drinking beer now, and Coca-Cola," I said as we arrived at the edge of the main plaza.

"There is one strong ray of hope," Esperón said. "It takes seven to ten years to get a maguey plantation into production—and the new small holders can't afford to be that patient. They have to eat immediately. When all the great pulque haciendas in the State of Querétaro are broken up, the acres may go into wheat or pasturage."

"And some bright, beautiful day in the future," he added as we hesitated which side of the square to take, "Mexico may be able to furnish good milk and pure drinking water to her people. A small thing to look to, but it would be like a millennium—to live in Mexico without a perpetual threat to the bowels."

The main plaza, called the Jardín Zenea, is the real hub of commerce and sociability. A small band was playing in the kiosk. The benches were moderately well filled with conscripts in gray-green uniforms and citizens. Bootblacks were kneeling here and there at their brisk trade. Before the cathedral, dealers in secondhand books had spread their sparse collections. But the plaza was as disappointing to me as Puebla's had been. The glazed tile of the cathedral's tower and dome was more alluring from a distant than on a near view. The interior was not impressive in design or decoration. The church was crowded, but most of the worshippers were women. A boys' choir was singing in full soprano and doing very well. The air was thick with incense. Some of the representations of agonized martyrdom seemed unusually gory.

"Why do Mexicans make their sacred pictures and statues so bloody?" I asked.

"Mexico has been so drenched in blood that an image that is not bleeding profusely would stir little emotion. The usual moderate drops of blood from the spear-pierced breast would hardly seem worth a passing sigh. Before the Spanish cruelty and the imported bullfight, we have the Aztec inheritance, when the temples were veritable slaughterhouses of the gods, with field days of human sacrifice. And so many personal knives in Mexico get smeared with human gore that the Church has to overdo the bloody wounds to make an impression. The people get an emotional purgation kneeling before a gashed saint. The bloodier he is, the easier their lot to bear."

We turned a corner. I said, "You think the return of the Church's influence is bad for Mexico?"

Esperón stopped on the sidewalk to make himself clear. "Depends. If the Catholic Church came back with a love for the people, that would be fine. But if it is coming back with desire for political power, and stirring up old fanaticism! Mind you, though, if the Catholic Church had not come with the conquistadors, the history of the Indian would have been far more desolating. The Protestant conquerors of your country were infinitely more ruthless. They did not settle among the Indians, as the Catholic Spanish did; they killed them off or pushed them clear out of the way. The Spaniards may have robbed the Indian, and worked him half to death, but they did declare he was a human being with a soul to be saved. For all their brutality and greed, the Spaniards still had an evangelical mission, no matter how much it was mixed with superstition."

We walked on again. "But the priests don't need to fool and scare the people, or resort to such ways to get money. They say that in Guadalajara they once sold printed passports to Heaven for forty pesos. I would hate to estimate the millions of pesos that went out of Mexico to Rome."

"But if the Church had not collected money," I protested, "they could not have built the beautiful things like this before us." We had come to the favorite ecclesiastical building in Querétaro, the Collegiate Convent of Santa Rosa de Viterbo.

"This particular one," Esperón said with a grin, "was erected from goods confiscated from smugglers."

"Even so—however they got it—here it is, and without the Church this fine structure would not have been."

Dating from the seventeenth century, the convent had been reconstructed by that remarkable Creole, Eduardo de Tresguerras, born in Celaya in 1765. This was the last renowned architect of the viceregal period. Like Michelangelo, he was gifted with numer-

ous talents. He was not only an architect and a sculptor, but a painter, an etcher, a wood-carver, a poet, and a musician. A deeply devout man, he was endowed with tremendous energy and drive to express his religious fervor in enduring beauty. When he had finished all his commissions at his home town, Celaya, he came to Querétaro to build afresh, to reconstruct, or to adorn. His best work in Querétaro is to be found in this Church of Santa Rosa, in the Convent of Santa Clara, and in the Federal Palace, with its splendid Spanish-Moorish patio.

Tresguerras took the seventeenth-century structure of Santa Rosa and stamped it with his genius. He did over the cloisters, the dome, the towers. He gave the roof a balustrade, and hung sculptured Saracen heads from the curves of the outer arches of the facade. He tiptoed the roof of the bell-tower in the manner of a Chinese pagoda. The whole exterior effect is daring, but remarkably pleasing. Within, the nave is adorned with elaborate altars in Churrigueresque, lavish with thick gold leaf. The confessionals with their iron grills and gilded arabesque suggest Persia rather than Christendom. Like Shakespeare, Tresguerras made use of any source that stirred his imagination.

In the sacristy, the great mural that fills the head of the rooms and reveals a strong Murillo influence is perhaps the finest specimen of Tresguerras' painting. It depicts the legend of the Closed Garden, with Saint Rose working among her pupils, and white lambs receiving white roses from the Virgin to be dyed in blood from the Christ's wounds. Where the brilliant Indian Ceferino was obviously groping in San Miguel de Allende, Tresguerras' mature work reveals an assurance, as if he had been commissioned and empowered by Heaven to express his devotional zeal in any radical manner he chose.

"It was Tresguerras," Esperón said, "who turned the head of the eagle backward on his Independence monument in the plaza of Celaya. When asked why, he replied, 'So that the eagle may not see the barbarities committed by our municipal authorities.' He was referring to the City Hall facing the monument with its ugly mediocrity."

Though I had found Querétaro's main plaza disappointing, I was delighted with the little square called the Plaza de la Independencia. Although it lay only two blocks away, the rhythms of the two were very different. There were no hotels, no streetcars, no church. It was like a retreat amid parterres of flowers, with a commodious central fountain, an outlet from the great aqueduct. On one side of the square stood the Municipal Palace, which had been the home of the famous wife of the corregidor, whose three taps on the floor of her bedroom to the waiting janitor beneath sounded the warning to Allende that launched the fight for independence. On the facade there is a description of a climatic moment in Mexican history and a tribute to Josefa Ortiz Domínguez, "the heroine of the Independence."

Near this square Maximilian made his headquarters when the royalist troops were besieged by Juárez's forces. He used to sit on the flat stone curbing of the central fountain and take the sunshine as doom closed about the city and the water supply was cut off by the enemy. This morning girls who had come to fill water jugs lingered. Some sat on the curbing, their skirts spread wide, the dazzle of youth upon them—the tentative way of youth, assuming an obscure indifference.

On a bench by a white-flowering tree we sat down, facing the most charming colonial mansion in Queré-

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Wood Engraving.

By Leopoldo Mendez.

# The Great God Corn

By Herbert Cerwin

**A**N INDIAN LEGEND has it that corn was on earth before man, for man was made of corn. When the ancient gods created the world, so the legend goes, they decided to create man. They made him first like themselves, but promptly destroyed him, for he would have been as powerful as the gods. They subsequently made him of clay, but he could not breathe and was useless. So they reached out for green stalks of corn and they made man as he is today, his blood and flesh, of corn.

Corn is not only the soul of man, they say, it is life. It must never be stepped on, it must never be thrown away. It must be treated with care and with respect, for to do otherwise would be a sacrilege. It has been so, not for two or three hundred years, but for two thousand, perhaps five thousand years. Corn was grown, toiled over and eaten by the Indians when the rest of the world was still entirely carnivorous.

It is as mysterious as the people who first grew it, for no one knows where it came from and how it was discovered. The plant does not grow wild, nor does it seed itself. It belongs strictly to man, who must plant it and care for it; otherwise it does not survive. While many attempts have been made to trace its ancestry, the original weed from which it sprang has disappeared. There is, however a grass, teosinte, found in the Guatemala highlands, which may be one of the parents of corn.

Give a piece of land to a Mexican and, no matter how small it is, he will plant corn on it before he does anything else. Travel anywhere in Mexico and wherever there is fertile land, even if it is high on a side of a hill, there will be corn growing, the high stalks

swaying in the wind. Corn means life. Corn also means Mexico.

Perhaps as much as 80 per cent of Mexico's population depend on it for part of their food and certainly half that number live almost entirely on corn which they sow and grow themselves. To us, a wheat-growing nation, wheat means flour and flour, bread. To the Mexicans, corn means not only the tortilla, which is their bread, but for many their complete nourishment. From the corn even comes the atole, a thick milk-like preparation which is drunk at breakfast or in times of illness. No matter how much an Indian has eaten, of meat, of beans or other foods, his hunger remains unsatisfied if he has not partaken of this corn, which he calls *maiz*. For *maiz*, he says is meat for the meat of the body. He is unhappy without it.

Once we were visiting a small village in the interior of the state of Chiapas, which is rich in wild life. Almost at the very door of the village there were deer, pigeons, wild turkeys, tropical fruits of all kinds and wild sweet potatoes which they call *camote*. But we noticed that the women, for there were no men about, were sad and depressed.

Of an old woman we asked, "Why are you and everyone so triste?"

"We are dying of hunger," she said.

"How can that be? There is much food here."

"But we have no *maiz*," she said. "Our crops have failed."

"And the men, where are they?"

"They have been gone a week. They are searching for *maiz*."

We may not understand this feeling of emptiness and it is difficult, too, for us to understand why the Mexican Indian venerates corn the way he does. But we are not the only ones who fail to comprehend or to grasp how close corn is to them. Even the Spanish priests were puzzled by it. One of them chronicled in his diary that "if one looks closely he will find that everything (these Indians) did and talked about had to do with maíz; in truth, they fell little short of making a god of it. And so much is the delight and gratification they got and still get out of their cornfields, that because of them they forget wife and children and every other pleasure, as if their cornfields were their final goal and ultimate happiness."

But did we not say that corn was part of man? Did we not say that nothing is closer to a Mexican than his maíz? The old priest was right. They will forget wives and children for maíz; they will forget the very thing they are fighting for, because the impulse to grow corn is as powerful in an Indian as the impulse to live.

This was well proved in the War of the Castes on the Yucatan peninsula in 1847. The uprising of the Indians during that period came as a sequel to three centuries of native rancor against the Spanish conquerors. The objective of the rebellion was not only to win autonomy for the Indians but to rid Yucatan of the Spaniards.

The fighting began on the morning of July 20, 1847, and the Indian offensive was so vigorous that by May of the following year the whites were all but annihilated. The historian Baquerio recorded that "more than 250 villages and their surrounding hamlets had been burned. The troops had fallen back to the very gates of the city of Merida and the Indians had two-thirds of the country. Commerce, industry and agriculture were at a standstill."

The Spaniards, faced with complete extermination, made a desperate effort and had some success in reorganizing their forces for a counterattack. Yet they might have failed and the Indians won, but for corn. Rain began to fall, the ground to soften. It was full moon. It was time to plant corn. One by one, the Indians began to put down their weapons and to start back to their fields. The planting of corn was more important than fighting a battle, or winning a war. Corn was life.

It means as much to an Indian living in a city as it does to an Indian in the remote highlands. No Mexican who has Indian blood forgets for long the closeness and the feeling he has for corn. I remember that quite well about Joaquin, the gardener we had in Mexico City, and I think that I first learned from him what corn really means to the Mexican people.

I recall that the backyard of the house we moved into was disorderly and needed cleaning. The flowers, the geraniums, the marigolds and the lilies had been neglected and had become dry stalks. There were weeds a foot high and rusty tin cans strewn about. Growing in the center was a patch of corn which had turned yellow.

We told Joaquin to clean the yard. He listened to our instructions, holding his worn-out sombrero in his hand. Then he glanced over at the corn.

"But the maíz, señor?" he asked.

"That goes too," we said.

"Could we not keep it?" he said. "I shall take care of it carefully around it."

"No," we said. "Better take it out too."

"As you order, señor," he said, and left us.

Joaquin set to work and when he was finished we went out to see what he had done. The yard had been carefully gone over and cleared of the old flow-

wers, the tin cans, the weeds. The soil had been turned over and it glistened a rich black under the afternoon sun. The place looked better, except for the corn. It had not been touched.

"You are not through yet," we said to him. "That corn has to be removed."

Joaquin glanced down sheepishly at the straw sombrero in his hand.

"Well?" we said.

The gardener's eyes met ours. They were deeply set back, clear and black. Finally he spoke in a soft voice, anxious not to offend, but firm.

"That corn, señor," he said. "It cannot be your wish to have it destroyed."

"Yes, it is our wish," we said. "Besides it is getting old and yellow and it will die soon."

"Is it then not better to let it die of its own will?"

"No, Joaquin. It is in the way. It has to go."

He looked over at the corn, then once more at us. His eyes narrowed, his lips tightened and sadness came to his face.

"Ay, señor, please do not force me to do this thing you wish me to do."

"But what is wrong, Joaquin?"

Joaquin hesitated for a moment before he answered.

"Señor, my people and I live on maíz," he said. "God has given it to us as our food. Would it not offend God if I were to destroy with my hands what He has given us to live on? You see, señor, that maíz does not belong to you or to me. It belongs to all of us. While it still has life one must not hurt it in any way."

"All right, Joaquin," we said. "Let it be."

The sadness left his face, the sparkle returned to his eyes.

"God will bless you for it," he said, and returned to his work.

It is not unusual for Mexicans to feel that way about corn. It would be unusual if they felt otherwise. Corn is not only their main source of food, but, as we have seen, they have a great reverence for it. Their Aztec and Mayan ancestors, to appease the gods of maíz, sacrificed human lives; since then they have learned new ways to worship it. They place the seeds on the church altar, they bring it to the priest for blessing and they also pray to their Christian God for rain and for good crops as they always have done.

But at the same time they have not entirely abandoned the pagan rites they once practiced; those elaborate ceremonies and fiestas in which maíz is the principal object of their veneration still go on. Some of these ceremonies take place just before the rain falls and as the period of corn planting approaches, other rites are held when the corn is green and the kernel is forming. Occasionally a rooster, a lamb or a calf is sacrificed and the ground is anointed with the blood while the rest of the Indians chant prayers and burn incense to their ancient gods. They have fear and respect for the Christian God but they are still superstitious, still unable to break away completely from the old influence.

There were a god and a goddess of maíz in the Maya and Aztec civilizations, though little is known about them. In Mayan codices, however, the god of maíz appeared as a slim, beautiful youth with long, flowing hair. Often ears of corn are made to represent him, the silk of the tassel being used for the flowing hair. In many villages during certain holiday periods, little figures are shaped out of the dry cornhusks. Sometimes they find their way to Mexico City where tourists buy them as curiosities without realizing their

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# Our Hemisphere's First Woman Poet

By Chesley M. Hutchings

**T**HIS year all Mexico is celebrating the tercentenary of the birth of her first woman poet, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, whose name was Juana de Asbaje before she took the veil. Juana wrote some hundred and eighty years before Julia Ward Howe or Emily Dickinson, and like Emily she suffered from restrictions put upon women of letters. She was an apostle for the rights of woman to a higher education long before any Anglo-Saxon claimed such privileges.

It is hard to evaluate her poetry. Styles in poetry change; seventeenth-century verse with its conceits seems to us quaint and stilted. Juana was much influenced by Calderon, the great Conceptist. Her poems sometimes seem rhymed syllogisms, intellectual tours de force. Yet always the feeling is there, the sincerity of her emotions.

Born in 1651 in the village of Nepantla, half way up the side of Popocatepetl, of Spanish Creole stock, she showed early precocity and fondness for letters. "When I was not fully 3 years old," she writes, "my mother sent an elder sister of mine to study reading with a friend." (The friend was three miles away, at Amecameca.) "Affection and mischievousness, led me after her, and I so burned with desire to read that \*\*\* I told the teacher my mother requested her to give me lessons too. She did not believe me, but just to humor me gave me lessons \*\*\* and I learned to read in so short a time that I knew how when mother found out."

She imposed tasks upon herself: "I began to study Latin grammar and didn't have more than twenty lessons in all. So intense was my application that, being at that blossoming childhood when a girl thinks a lot of one's hair, I cut mine off some four to six finger lengths, imposing on myself this rule, that if by the time it grew out just that long again I had not learned such and such, I would cut it off again as punishment for my stupidity."

"When I was some 6 or 7 years of age \*\*\* I heard there was a University in Mexico City; hardly did I hear it when I began to worry my mamma to death with importunities and begging—the idea being I should put on boy's clothes and she would send me to Mexico to the home of some relatives \*\*\* to study and graduate at the university. She wouldn't hear of it."



Terra Cotta.

By Juan Cruz Reyes.

Later she did go to Mexico City and there, at 17, was given a private oral examination by the members of the university faculty, who were astounded at her erudition and would gladly have admitted her, had she been a boy.

She was made a lady-in-waiting at the viceroy's court, and became the pet of the Marquis of Mancera and his wife. She continued a favorite of three viceregal families, even after becoming a nun. One of the viceroys and his wife visited her convent at Puebla. The sisters put on some folk dances for them and Juana even danced the minuet with His Excellency.

Why did she become a nun, when still in her teens? Disappointment in love? Some affair from which she wished to escape?

She herself says (in a letter to Sister Philotea from which these quotations come): "I became a nun, for, though the state had things about it repugnant to my genius, yet, compared with the total negation which marriage would bring with it, it was less cramping and more decent, and I could \*\*\* live alone, have no obligatory occupations that would hinder my freedom to study."

Some find in her love sonnets interior evidence that an affair of the heart caused her sudden change from court to convent:

Silvio, I loath thee, and condemn myself \*\*\*

In another sonnet two men are involved:

Him who disdainful shuns me, I seek in love,

And him who loving seeks me, I disdain.

In vain I'm constant to who wrongs my love,

And wrong his love who constant is in vain. \*\*\*

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# Patterns of an Old City

## A ROUTINE ERRAND

By Howard S. Phillips

"COMPREHEND very well, Mother," Don Antonio said falteringly, his twiglike hand twitching uneasily over his bony knee. "I comprehend... You are very kind. You all have been very kind. And I don't want to seem an ingrate. It is only that I... Well, I thought that perhaps you could wait a little while longer... Another year... Perhaps I'll manage to last that long. By the time she is six, it yet won't be too late... I only want to feel sure that I can count on your kindness, Mother, when the time comes... To feel that you will take care of her when... that is, if I should..."

As if surmising that she was the subject of their talk, Luchita paused for a moment from her absorbing game with a row of bottle caps arranged on the floor, and turned at them her large black eyes. Don Antonio caught this inquiring gaze and forced himself to smile at her reassuringly. He sought to preserve this smile, though his rheumy eyes bore a frustrated and forlorn look when he repeated, "Another year... Perhaps it won't be too late."

The ageless face of the frail little woman in the sack-like black dress, with its tight and shiny skin as if from too much scrubbing, was devoid of expression. Sitting rigidly on the edge of the chair, with her thin and bloodless hands folded over her lap, her flat, square-toed shoes protruding from the folds of the long loose skirt, her fragile figure bespoke a calm inflexibility. As she looked at him, she seemed to be looking through and beyond him at an invisible presence, a stern and implacable presence of something which guided her mind and shaped her words, and precluded personal closeness.

"I have already explained the case, señor," she said, "and I am sure you comprehend. It is that just now, at this moment, we are fortunate to have a place for her. And you must understand that it is an unusual circumstance. We may not be that fortunate a year from now. The place, in fact, has been made for her, according to the arrangements that were made with your consent. So you must take advantage of the opportunity, or it may be impossible later. You must make the sacrifice, señor, and think of her future... She'll be all right with us, señor."

He sensed the mild reproach in her words, and lowering his gaze at the blunt and battered tips of her shoes, averting her impersonal eyes, he murmured, "Oh, yes. I understand. A man of my years and situation no longer needs to concern himself over his future. He at least can console himself to that extent. He has no future over which to worry. And yet I feel that while I am yet able to get about I would like to have her here... Keeping her here a while longer cannot seriously injure her future... That is, if—"

He broke off, timorous that he might have spoken too boldly, that he might have said something thoughtless or rash, and his harried wavering mind sank in confusion. I must defend myself, he thought. I cannot reject her kindness, but I must not let her have her way. Not just now. I must try and put it off. I must not let it happen now. I must defer it as long as I can. And while Luchita, again immersed in her game on the floor made inarticulate purring sounds as she shifted the bottle caps, and the woman sat silent in front of him, as if thoughtfully giving him time to ponder the hopelessness of his situation, his thoughts, seek-

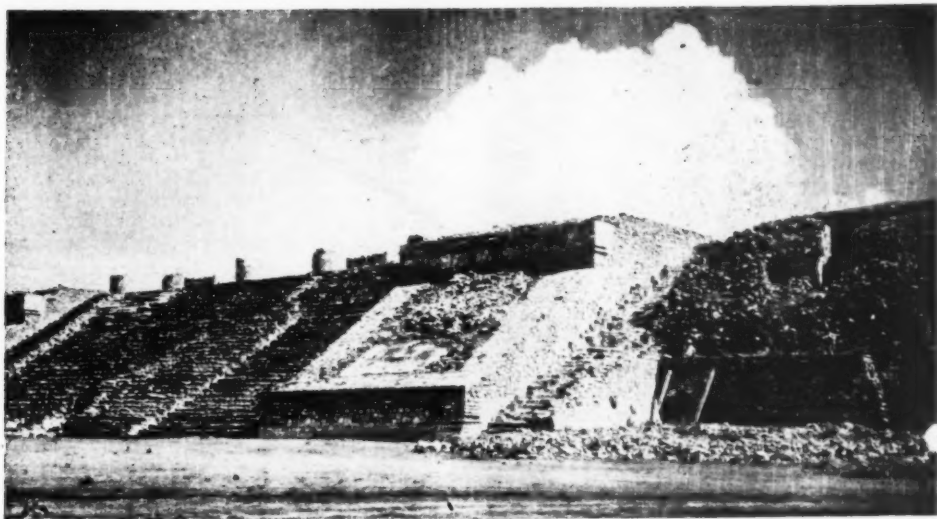
ing a fleeting refuge from the inevitable, drifted irrelevantly.

Charity, like justice, is blind, he thought. Impersonal, robed in black. The surcease of darkness. The all-obliterating benevolence of night. A nun, clothed in the hue of the tomb, in the blackness of otherworld-lines, bent on her holy task, meting out impersonal charity. And then, striving to reduce his insurmountable problem to this culminating moment, to perceive the significance and the source of his immediate plight, he wondered pointlessly why he had been so incautious, why, having seen her through the window, he opened the door and let her come in. He could have hidden himself, he thought, and she would presently get tired of ringing the door bell and go away. She would of course return to-morrow or the day after next. But he would at least gain that much time. She would return indeed to conclude her errand. It was useless to hesitate. Everything has been decided and agreed upon; he had voluntarily signed the papers, waived all rights or claims—a quite perfunctory procedure, for he was shorn of any legal right or claim—, so why was he now assuming this unreasonable attitude? I am merely being arbitrary, he thought, obdurate and inconsistent in trying to postpone what I have tacitly accepted as the only rational and obvious solution.

"You see, Mother," he said, "I thought that having been a school teacher all my life, she would be my final pupil." The nun's frail body shifted slightly, and her stubby shoes disappeared under the folds of her skirt. She held up one of her hands as if to deter him, then resignedly dropped it back on her lap. "I thought," he continued, "that even now, since my wife died and I am alone, I could yet take care of the two of us... But, naturally, it is just that I am wishing something that cannot be... Well, I thought, I still have my pension. It is not very much—only six pesos a day—but when my wife was alive it modestly provided for the three of us. And this little house, Mother—it took me twenty years to pay for it; but it is all paid up. Oh, yes. I paid it up years ago. So there is a roof over our heads... And as to this illness, this progressive decay, this malady they call arteriosclerosis, there are times, like for instance today, when I feel quite fit... I can manage the house chores. Do the little simple cooking, even washing and ironing. You wouldn't believe it, Mother, but this little dress she has on—I mended it myself the other day. I ripped the hem and lengthened it." The nun nodded to his mirthless chuckle, though her face remained expressionless and her eyes mirrored remoteness.

He went on talking, driven by the need to gain time, by the hope that thus he might clear up something which was yet confused in his mind, impelled by the incongruous hope which yet survived in his overwhelming hopelessness. "I understand that everything has been arranged, that the kind ladies from the Welfare Society have handled the case with care, have looked into all the details, and having, in fact, sought their good offices I have agreed with their decision. I, too, have made my decision—that is, my moral decision—and I am in full accord. I am relinquishing a charge, a custody that has lapsed... that has become invalid... because someone else possesses the legal rights which I lack... and because I myself have become invalid. I must disencumber myself of all obligations or

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Ruins at Monte Alban.

Photo. By A. Campos.

# Ancient Cities of Oaxaca

By Trent Elwood Sanford

**A**BOUT three hundred miles southeast of Mexico City, where the two coastal ranges of mountains converge into a sort of general upheaval which takes itself literally with recurring earthquakes, lies the Valley of Oaxaca (pronounced Wah-hah'-cah). Since it was until recent times well-nigh impossible of access by automobile most visitors drove half-way and, at Tehuacán (not to be confused with Teotihuacán) boarded the train of the narrow gauge railroad that winds down through dusty desert to emerge among waving green fields of sugar cane, and then climbs between the towering cliffs of the Canyon of Tomellin, before it drops into the fertile warm valley that, long ago, sheltered still other civilization of builders.

The trip through the canyon is a fascinating one. From the rear platform of the puffing, laboring train the colorful, rocky walls of the canyon can be seen twisting and dropping behind; and on the occasional mesas between the overhanging crags and serrated peaks huge candelabra cacti act as weird sentinels along the tracks. At one point the canyon is so narrow and deep that a tunnel has had to be built for passage of the river, giving the railroad the right of way, for there is not room in the canyon for both. In hot weather the rays of the sun beat mercilessly down into the narrow defile, and it takes a true lover of nature to rise above the blistering heat. Thus it is that the natives of Oaxaca, and of the surrounding villages which nestle among orchards of fruit and fields of sugar cane and of corn, say that in order to reach heaven (meaning Oaxaca) one has to go through hell.

That ride makes it possible to understand why the building of an automobile highway has been such a long and difficult job and also why it was that the tribes who inhabited the Valley of Oaxaca were so cut off from the plateau of Mexico to the northwest and from the jungles of Chiapas and Yucatán to the east. Isolated as they were by geographical conditions, these

independent tribes—chief among which were the Zapotecs and the Mixtecs, who were constantly at war with each other—lived and worked between the Toltecs in one direction and the Mayas in the other, and, in spite of their isolation and some distinctly different designs in architecture, must have served, at some period, as a link between the two. As in the case of the Toltecs, in place of history, we have chiefly legend; and although their rule, at one time, may have extended over considerable territory, the principal monuments of their civilization are not far from the Colonial and modern city of Oaxaca. They are Monte Albán, crowning a mountain ridge which overlooks the modern city, and Mitla, in a sloping valley some thirty miles away.

From Oaxaca City a road leading over the Atoyac River bridge climbs up the side of the mountain, reaching a height more than 1,000 feet above the valley, to the central plaza of Monte Albán, a ride by automobile of about twenty minutes. From that height the modern city (founded by the Spaniards a little more than four centuries ago) can be seen stretching out in the valley; and from that plaza an idea can be quickly gained of the size of the ancient city which preceded it, spreading out over the whole ridge, not in disordered array, but in a systematic grouping of platforms and buildings. Terraces winding around the mountain and hundreds of mounds are evidences of its extent. Nothing is left of natural contours, but from the main plaza, the Plaza of the Sun, the ruins of the city drop away in a succession of terraces, in all directions, into the valley below. In appearance it bears some resemblance to Xochicalco, but multiplied many times, in both height and extent.

The main plaza occupies the highest point. It is a rectangle 1,000 feet long by 650 feet wide, entirely surrounded by great platforms surmounted by pyramids. A row of three pyramids occupies the center of the great quadrangle.

Largest of the platforms is the one at the north end, which extends almost the entire width of the plaza. Until it was excavated in 1931-1932 by Dr. Alfonso Caso, Head of the Department of Archaeology of the National Museum of Mexico, it appeared as a huge shapeless mound. Excavation revealed a grand stairway of unusual width facing the plaza. It is nearly 130 feet wide, and is 42 feet high. Thirty-three steps lead to the top of the platform. Of curious interest is the fact that there are not one, but three stairways, superimposed. Since very little additional height was thus gained and a tremendous amount of labor must have been required, the reason for this superimposition is a mystery. Some religious motive may have demanded a periodic renewal. On either side of the grand stairway is a supporting wall 39 feet wide, the base of which is decorated with a double panel of stone. Beyond the supporting wall, on either side, is another, narrower stairway, beyond which the front walls of the platform are extended.

The pyramids in the center of the plaza and some of those at the south end have been uncovered, and have revealed, as did also the excavation of the great platform at the north end, large relief sculptures, merely used in the construction of the walls. Since some of them are even upside down, they had evidently been taken from buildings of a still earlier period, as was often done by the various native builders as well as by the Spaniards later. These sculptures are of human figures, all of them with some bodily deformity or with expressions of great pain on their faces. Whether they were caricatures of enemies or whether they were appeals by invalids to a God of Health can only be guessed. A number of stelae have been found at various locations on the site, with hieroglyphs resembling somewhat those of the Mayas in the use of bar and dot numerals, but with other characters differing from both those of the Mayas and those of the Toltecs.

Most of the stone structures of the plaza appear to be solid, probably built as bases for smaller structures which have disappeared. There are, however, in some of these massive masonry foundations, narrow vaulted passages roofed by the simple means of sloping stones, meeting to form an angular, pointed ceiling. It is the simplest form of arch, the two-piece arch.

At the northeast corner of the plaza, near the great north platform, is a ball court, recently excavated. It is of a sufficiently different type from the great ball court at Chichen Itzá to establish it as of a different period and with a decidedly different method of playing. Instead of vertical sides with stone rings built in as "baskets" for the game resembling basketball as at Chichen Itzá, it has sloping sides, built of many courses of small stones. Much too small for either steps or seats, these courses must have been covered to form a smooth surface used in the game.

A number of tombs have been uncovered at various points around the main plaza. Some of them have been found to contain elaborate funerary urns, not within the cell-like burial chamber, but in a sort of anteroom in front. One especially fine example (in the tomb known as Number 105) is placed in a niche over the entrance to the burial chamber. Tomb 104 remains of frescoes in color.

When the work of exploring the tombs was begun, the first was found to have been stripped of all its contents, and the second though intact, yielded only a few clay vessels. Still another was found to have been rifled, and then, in three more, only skeletons, pottery, and a few objects of jade and obsidian were brought to light. But in the seventh tomb to be explored was found the greatest archaeological treasure

ever discovered in America. When the first stones were removed the first object to be seen by Dr. Caso and his assistants was a large crystal bowl; and upon entering the tomb and lighting the floor with a flashlight, they found it aglow with golden beads, pendants, and rings, pearls, pieces of turquoise, and objects of silver, jade, amber, and jet.

Working 14 hours a day, it took the group of archaeologists a week to gather up the articles in the tomb and properly catalog them. Because of characteristics of pottery found at a lower level, the tomb in which these jewels were discovered is believed by Dr. Caso to have been built by the Zapotecs, who first used it, then rifled by the Mixtecs who in turn, buried their nobles there with the treasures which have so recently come to light. The jewels, then are Mixtecan, buried, probably, not long before the Conquest.

It is a belief of the natives of the region that anyone who explores a tomb is punished by the spirits of the dead and becomes bewitched. Dr. Caso tells a story that sprang up when he uncovered Tomb Number 7 and found the treasure there without coming to any harm.

"It is related that one night, when I was in the central plaza of Monte Albán, a well of crystal water opened up at the foot of one of the monuments, and in the middle of it floated a red vessel made from a ground shell inside of which was a gilded fish. Instead of being frightened by this marvel, I caught the jug and the fish. When I touched it, whereupon the fish informed me of the location of the treasure in Tomb Number 7. Therefore it was not strange that one to whom the fishes of Monte Albán had spoken should be in no danger of having a spell cast upon him when uncovering the tombs!"

The collection of Monte Albán jewels is now housed in the State Museum in Oaxaca, where a large room is devoted to their display. Nowhere else is there such conclusive evidence of the refinement of ancient American culture. The collection includes a golden diadem with an ornamental plume of beaten gold; a great golden breast-plate representing the head of a warrior wearing a helmet in the form of a jaguar's head; other smaller breast-pieces with eagle symbols representing the sun and day, and jaguar symbols representing the moon and night; a golden collar with a fringe of golden bells; and a mask of gold, intricately carved, with earrings and a lip ornament, and even hair of filigree work in gold. There are necklaces of gold, in some of which each bead is carved to represent a turtle, and in others carved to represent jaguars' teeth; there are other necklaces of pearls, turquoise, and jade, intricately carved ear pendants of gold; rings, bracelets, and lip ornaments of gold and of jade; and beads and plaques of jet and of amber. There are obsidian earstuds and knives; there are objects carved from bones of the jaguar and deer, cut in high relief as exquisitely as was ever done in China or India in ivory; there are vases and urns of translucent white onyx bearing intricately carved inscriptions; and the largest and finest rock crystal bowl ever found in America.

But finest of all are the delicate ornaments of gold, of amazingly beautiful design and executed with an artistry that would have aroused the admiration of Benvenuto Cellini. On viewing this collection, all taken from one tomb, one can well believe the extravagant descriptions given by the conquistadores of the presents sent to Cortés; and one is appalled to think of the thousands of golden gems plundered from the living and the dead and melted down for the metal they contained. The gilded fish of Monte Albán did well to keep his secret as long as he did, and then divulge it to one who could be trusted to share such

glorious treasures with anyone who cares to come and see.

In striking contrast to the extensive city of Monte Albán on its eminence, Mitla is situated in a valley, and is just as different in the architecture it offers. Instead of great platforms and pyramids, its claim to fame lies in well-preserved temples placed on low platform bases, and in the stone mosaic ornament applied thereon. There are none of the sculptures of human figures and none of the stelae but instead a wealth of architectural ornament in purely geometric forms, which appear to be based on textile designs.

The temples of Mitla lie about thirty miles southeast of Oaxaca. A dusty road leads over the fields in the rather barren valley, and on it plod oxen drawing primitive carts with solid wooden wheels. On either side are ranges of mountains. To the north, at one point, a jagged outline somewhat similar in form to Ixtacehuatl, though much smaller, is known locally as "Popo's Ixta's little boy."

It is on this road that one passes the little village of Santa María del Tule, with its famous ahuehuete tree in a churchyard, believed to be the largest and oldest living thing in the world. Estimates of its age vary from 2,000 to 5,000 years. Its vast, buttressed trunk has a circumference of 160 feet, thus exceeding that of the largest California redwood; and, as all the guidebooks state, it takes thirty persons with outstretched arms and finger tips touching to encircle it. The spread of its mass of luxuriant but delicate green foliage is 140 feet, and, according to the Indians, it takes "two looks to see the top." More than four centuries ago, when Cortés paused there on his way to Honduras, the tree commanded the admiration of the Spaniards, and they soon built a church in its shade. Baron von Humboldt is said to have been so impressed by its size that he carved his name on its trunk, an inscription since almost overgrown by the bark! The tree is now a national monument, visitors are warned against

sharing the Baron's kind of enthusiasm for it, and many Indians still worship it as the God of Growth. The venerable giant is still growing, as it doubtless was when the temples at Mitla were built.

The famous temples are to be found at the edge of the cactus-fenced Indian village of Mitla, which is a corruption of the Aztec word *Mictlan*, meaning "Hell," or "Place of the Dead." The Zapotec name is *Lyobaa*, which means "Tomb." As the name implies, it was not a city for living people, but a burial place for Zapotec kings and priests—the most sacred of all of the cities of the Zapotecs. The city of the people was a mile or so away, where remains of massive fortifications are still to be seen.

The principal structures at Mitla are temples arranged in groups of four around paved courts and placed on low platforms. Some of the platforms contain cruciform tombs. The best-preserved examples of ancient architecture in Mexico, these temples have excited the admiration of visitors ever since the first historical account was given of them by Fray Martín de Valencia, one of the first friars to come to Mexico after the Conquest. The remarkable thing is that they were permitted to remain.

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In the most complete of these groups of temples, the largest and most important structure is the one to the north, which is reached by a flight of ten steps leading up to the platform on which the building rests. Three square openings, separated by wide stone piers, lead into the temple, and the facade is decorated with panels filled with the geometric ornament for which Mitla is noted.

The doorways lead directly into a great hall, 125 feet long by 23 feet wide, known as the Hall of the Monoliths because of the six tall columns on the longitudinal center line. These columns are of porphyry and are about 14 feet high above the floor, probably

Ruins at Monte Albán.

Photo. By A. Campos.



extending several feet below the floor, and measure 3 feet in diameter at the bottom. Tapering slightly toward the top, they have neither base nor capitals. Of the roof which these columns are thought to have supported nothing remains. Because of the span the roof beams must have been of wood.

A passage, with traces of color still left on the walls, leads into an open court about 30 feet square and with walls about 13 feet high. As on the exterior, horizontal panels are filled with stone fretwork in various geometric designs. A wide doorway in the center of each side leads, through walls 5 feet thick, into a narrow hall flanking the court. In one of these narrow halls are particularly fine examples of fretwork in stone, of three different designs in bands extending around all of the walls of the room.

It is this geometric ornament that makes the temples of Mitla unique among ancient American buildings. For some unknown reason, natural and mythological subjects were not portrayed in sculpture, nor was the human figure used, as at Monte Albán. All of the stone decoration is geometric. For the most part, instead of being carved on large stones, it is made up of small pieces in quite a variety of patterns, making an overall stone mosaic in relief. The stones vary in size from an inch and half square up to two inches of various shapes. Hundreds of thousands of them must have been used throughout the groups of buildings. They have been very accurately cut as wedge-shaped blocks and fitted in a bedding of mortar into the face of the wall, without any mortar showing at the surface and with joints so tight that a knife blade cannot be inserted into them.

Of equal interest to the stone mosaics is the treatment of the lintels over the doorways in rooms and courts where the mosaics occur. Naturally, the treatment of mosaics, which were inlaid on the surface of the wall and applied against a filling of concrete or rubble, could not be used where a support such as a lintel was required. In order to preserve the harmony of design, the stone craftsmen carved the same patterns into the face of the huge stone lintels. Some of these lintels are nearly twenty feet long and weigh as much as fifteen tons. To quarry them, bring them to the site, and erect them, were engineering feats worthy of admiration; the subsequent carving must have required a skill and a patience equally worthy of admiration.

That brings up the eternal question, much discussed and never settled. How did they do it? No implements of steel or iron have ever been found at an ancient American site. Some copper and bronze implements have been found, most of them of comparatively late date and none of them suitable for stone carving. Added to that, the fact that copper was more precious to the ancient Americans than silver and gold would seem to rule copper out as ever superseding stone tools in building construction or in sculpture.

Quarries have been discovered, several miles away from the Mitla temples, from which the stone must have been taken; and the stone floors of these quarries are covered with thousands of worn-out and broken stone tools, with which armies of Indian laborers must have worked. The stone used in the construction and for the mosaics is a volcanic formation, known as trachyte, comparatively soft and easy of cleavage, yet suitable for building purposes. To quarry huge blocks of such a material, even with stone tools, does not seem, then, an impossibility, although a great amount of labor must have been required; and an equal or greater amount must have been needed for lifting, transporting, and erecting them, not to mention the later carving.

But that does not entirely answer the question. The structures at Monte Albán are faced with almost unworkable quartzite and granite; and the objects discovered there show that the ancient Indians carved such materials as rock crystal, one of the most difficult of materials to work, as well as jade and obsidian. As a test, an archaeologist recently drew a simple design on a fragment of soft stone and, choosing several hundred stone tools, put four Indians to work on it. At the end of a week they had broken or worn out all of the stone tools and had achieved no recognizable design; while near by were huge ancient monuments of basalt, quartzite, and diorite, beautifully carved in high relief.

Under several of the temples at Mitla and at a number of neighboring sites are cruciform tombs, with walls covered with the same designs as in the mosaic work, but, like the lintels, carved on huge blocks of stone.

Two or three hundred yards to the north of the main group of buildings stands a domed Spanish church, built in the middle of a half-demolished Zapotec temple, and of stones taken from that temple. What remains of the temple wall is covered with more mosaic designs; and the walls of a large court on the farther side, until recently used as a stable, show, in addition examples of color painting in red and black, better than any in the main group. Although the stone ornament was entirely of geometric designs, fragmentary remains of frescoes show a remarkable talent in picture writings of mythological content.

On the south side of the church is the sacristy, a square room with perfectly plain plaster walls. Not very long ago some of the plaster fell off. Since then, to the consternation of the priest in charge but to the edification of all students of ancient America, most of it has been taken off. The base on which the plaster had been applied was, again, an intricate pattern of stone mosaics, and on the surface were still evidence of the deep red colors contrasting with black and white, which, in days long gone by, formed a series of beautiful textile patterns, reserved for the questionable appreciation of the Zapotec kings and priests when they went to hell.

## Clouds

By Christie Jeffries

**B** LACK notes on white, the clouds create  
A mighty keyboard in the sky,  
On which great forces orchestrate  
The thunder's crash, the raindrop's sigh.



Photo.

By F. Vives.

# Wax from the Desert

By Herbert Joseph Mangham

**T**HE tourist with the sixteenth-inch layer of youthful bloom sniffed as she walked down the street in Saltillo, but not too vigorously, because she did not want to risk cracking her enamel. The odor was pleasant without being sweet, rather like the scent that perfumers are attempting to make a habit with the American male. With politely contained curiosity she stepped through the doorway. All she saw was some vats and a few workmen.

"Qué es?" she asked making a dangerous drain on her total reserve of Spanish.

"Cera de candelilla, señora," said one of them.

"Oh?"

The one who had lived in Eagle Pass (pronounced Eagly Pahs), Texas, stepped forward and explained, "Little-candle wax, lady."

"Oh," she said again, and after a moment's hesitation smiled cordially at all and withdrew, for all that could be said on the subject seemed to have been said. She still doesn't know that some of that wax went all the way to New York to give consistency to the youthful bloom she spreads on so carefully. The gum her grandchild chews also contains a little; that is why it breaks easily instead of bending in the stubborn fashion of certain cheap brands. Wrigley has a blending plant in Chicago.

It is an ingredient of hand cosmetics as well as facial cosmetics, to lend durability and non-slip quali-

ties to the leather bands used in machinery. It is also used in other forms of leather dressing, and furniture polish, shoe polish, candles, organic cements (such as dental cement), sealing wax, varnishes, electrical insulating compositions, phonograph records, paper size, celluloid, rubber, water-proofing and insect-proofing for containers, pain removers (to lower volatilization), soft wax stiffener, a bath for bullets to prevent rust, and substitutes for beeswax and carnauba, a Brazilian product which is the hardest of all waxes. It was especially useful during the war when no carnauba was being shipped from Brazil.

The war interrupted experiments to produce a floor for skating rinks that would serve in all temperatures. Because of its high melting point it would not have to be chilled, but its tendency to contract and expand with changing temperatures and to crack in the process, presents difficult problems. Its melting point, 149 to 156 degrees Fahrenheit, is exceeded only by carnauba, 184 to 196 degrees, and a few of the rarer waxes. Its comparative cheapness encourages its substitution for carnauba.

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The candelilla (little candle) is a spineless cactus. The name is applied to about fifty species of euphorbiaceae. The mature plants grow from two to four

feet in height, but the larger varieties do not serve so well commercial purposes. The long, slender, spike-like leaves, usually about a quarter of an inch in diameter, range from brown through brownish-green to green, and contain a sap like latex for which no commercial use has yet been discovered. As they mature, they cover themselves with a wax coating as a protection from the sun.

There has been some of this industry in the state of Puebla, near Tehuacán, but most of it is in the north because of the higher wax content in the plants that grow there. It extends over the states of Nuevo León, Chihuahua, Durango, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas and, especially, Coahuila, which produces more than the other states combined. The little town of Cuatro Ciénegas exports the most, with Saltillo close behind. Small quantities of the plant also grow in Texas and New Mexico, but not enough for commercial use.

The coastal Indians used to bring their fishing nets to the northern plains to dip them in water in which the plant had been boiled, and of course the native candle-makers used it; but commercial exploitation did not begin until 1909. Practically the same production methods as of forty years ago are still used because of the migratory characteristics of the industry.

Few travelers have the fortune to see a candelilla camp in action, and it is a pity, for it is a picturesque affair. It is usually on an open, cactus-dotted mesa bordered by jagged mountains. The producer likes to pick a location close to a road and to a source of water when possible, but he has to make the best of what he can get in that desert country. He sometimes carries his water more than 40 kilometers.

Experienced workmen pull the plants, in such a manner that part of the roots remain in the ground. These roots produce a new plant which matures in about two and a half years. Cultivation is not profitable, because the plant grows so widely. The workmen load the plants on trucks when roads allow them, but it is more usual to see the bundles heaped on two-wheeled ox-carts or balanced on either side of the invaluable burro.

The plants are brought into camp and dumped near the pailas in heaps that resemble haystacks from a distance. The paila is the center of each of the several working units. This is a rectangular tank embedded in the earth. A cave-like furnace is dug under one end, with a small vent and an opening to admit fuel. The pailero and an assistant half fill the tank with water, add a liter or two of sulphuric acid, and fork in about 250 kilograms of candelilla. Then they lower an iron grate and lock it to press down the plants.

As the water boils, the pailero adds more acid. The wax rises to the surface as a grayish-white scum. The pailero skims it off with a perforated iron ladle and pours it into his tambor, which is a 50-gallon sheet iron drum that has been cut in half and equipped with a bung-hole to assist in drainage. Then the grate is opened and the used plants are forked onto wheelbarrows. The helper spreads them on the ground to dry for fuel, while the pailero starts the process again, renewing the water and sulphuric acid.

This process extracts about two per cent of the weight of the plant in wax. Some authorities estimate that scientific methods would increase this to as much as 12 per cent.

As darkness falls, the contents of the tambores are poured into cortadores, which are 100-gallon drums placed over a fire. The crude wax is boiled and stirred while the operator removes the floating stems. Then the fires are doused to allow the wax to cool, and, after a little song with mandolin accompaniment, the workmen roll up in their serapes to sleep a few hours before gathering fresh supplies of the plant.

These workmen can make from ten to twenty pesos a day, which is good pay in that part of the country; and they can rid themselves of an accumulation of 200 pesos in one night when they hit Saltillo's Calle Terán.

In the morning, the solid cake of semi-refined wax is removed from the cortador and broken into pieces with a mallet. The wax at this stage is called cerote. It still contains a small quantity of foreign solids and from 4 to 15 per cent water. The color, which is determined by the water content, may be a very light brown or a chalky white—the more water, the whiter.

The producers take the cerote to the refineries in Cuatro Ciénegas, Saltillo and other towns. There are about 20 refineries in Mexico and 600 producers, who are organized in six unions.

The refining tanks are provided with two outlet valves. One of them, about four inches from the bottom, serves to let out the refined wax, which is conducted to the cooling floors through a two-or three-inch pipe. The other valve, attached to the bottom of the tank, lets out the "foots," the remaining wax with the impurities that have sunk to the bottom, which is collected in reservoirs and added to the next boiling for further refining.

Some tanks are heated by steam, others over direct heat, which may come from dried candelilla plants, wood, kerosene under pressure or diesel oil. The capacity of the refineries varies from one-half to twelve tons of cerote daily.

As soon as the cerote in the tank is melted, the operator adds 500 to 1000 grams of sulphuric acid, stirring the wax with a wooden paddle. As the melt boils, the operator regulates the heat carefully, because the cerote easily boils up and overflows. Sometimes he lowers the foam by rapid movements of a pitchfork. The boiling continues until evaporation has reduced the water content to one per cent. The operator judges the time by the aspect of the melt. The dehydrated wax is a peanut-butter brown. The Germans developed a bleaching process before the war, which they refused to divulge; but other processes have now been developed in the United States.

When the wax has boiled sufficiently, it is allowed to stand four or five hours so the impurities can sink to the bottom. Then the outlet valve is opened and the wax is poured on the cooling floors, where it remains from 12 to 16 hours. It hardens in a layer two or three inches thick. Then the wax is broken up, put in 80-kilogram jute bags, and sent to the storage-house.

Now it is ready to be rushed to New York to bolster up the friendly Americana's defenses in her battle against disintegration. Most of the product goes to the factories of the United States. A great deal is exported, especially to Europe; but 90 per cent of the export is also by way of the United States.



"Dance of the Old Men."

By Miguel Alonso Machado.

## The Dance in México

By Guillermo Jiménez

**T**HE art of the dance is one and multiple. It is the bold spontaneous manner of translating emotion. Its movements, dips, undulations and gestures form the most captivating and varied images which can be conceived. The step is to the dance what the number is to mathematics.

Behind the arabesques of the dance are the stories of whole peoples—the religions, vices and pleasures of humanity. The dance is the realization of objective beauty, which invites love—or worship.

Nauhuatl, Toltecs, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Totonacs, Mayas—the first inhabitants of Mexico—seem to have danced in worship. Men with yellow faces, with faces bronzed by the sun, faces covered with symbolic masks; men who danced religious and war dances around their bloody idols.

The god of the dance was named Mixcoatl, and in all the ancient cities, adjacent to the temples, precisely as among the legendary and wise Chinese, there were teachers, who taught the children choral arts. They sang to the sounds of primitive musical instruments: seashells, bells, bulls' horns, turtle shells, hahuatl and teponaztlis.

Stringed instruments were, according to certain venerable historians, unknown to the Aztecs.

The hahuatl was a type of drum, formed from a wooden cylinder three feet high, decorated with brilliant colored drawings oftentimes lacquered; on the could graduate its tone by tightening or loosening it. upper side was a well tanned hide pulled taut which

The teponaztli, so much used by certain Mexican aborigines, was a hollow wooden cylinder with two openings in the middle. Two sticks, like drum sticks, were used to beat it. They produced a mellow, sad sound which helped one perceive the words of the songs.

One of the chief activities of these warlike, nomadic peoples was the dance. The Indians danced to solemnize the feasts of their idols. They also danced to celebrate their victories. The dances of the primitive Mexicans were of the same importance as the dances of the inhabitants of ancient Egypt.

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Two names were used to designate the dances of the Mexican aborigines: "Mecavaliztli" and "Metoliztli," meaning, respectively, sacred dances and profane dances. There were professional dancers and singers in all the big cities. On the day that they performed, a huge platform or stage was erected in the principal square.

For the Mexican people the dance is a cult. Since time immemorial the Indians held an essentially metaphysical concept concerning the dance. At first they invented the dances in honor of the stars, the sun and the moon; the military dances developed later.

The imperfection, the rusticity of the music of the early Mexicans form a distinct contrast with the splendid variety of their dances. Sometimes the Aztecs dan-

Continued on page 46



"Old Rancheria." Oil.

By Armando García Nuñez.

## Armando García Núñez

By Guillermo Rivas

"Street Corner." Oil.

By Armando García Nuñez.



**T**HERE are few painters in our midst whose personality commands such a wide public following that their periodical exhibitions comprise an artistic event looked forward to with veritable eagerness. Armando García Nuñez belongs among these few. Each year his exhibits attract a loyal multitude of spectators, who are not drawn by the promise of novelty, by a curiosity for aesthetic enigmas, but by a desire to view the newer work of an acknowledged maestro, of an artist who throughout fifty years of prolific effort has created good paintings, coached in readily intelligible terms, that pursue no other aim than a truthful depiction of nature.

The paintings García Nuñez has assembled for his current exhibition at the Círculo de Bellas Artes present a kaleidoscopic vision of the Mexican countryside—an array of sweeping landscapes, or somnolent, sun-drenched village streets, of scenes along the beaches of Acapulco—fresh and revealing glimpses of the by-ways the artist has roamed through many years, preserving his undiminished zest and youthful venturesomeness.

Impeccable of craft, lyrically evocative, these paintings express the eternal verities that beauty is inherent in simply uttered truth, and that art, nowadays the handmaiden of so many abstruse intentions, has no higher mission than the expression of beauty.

"At the Lake." Oil.  
By Armando García Nuñez.



"Fibermex at Acapulco." Oil.  
By Armando García Nuñez.

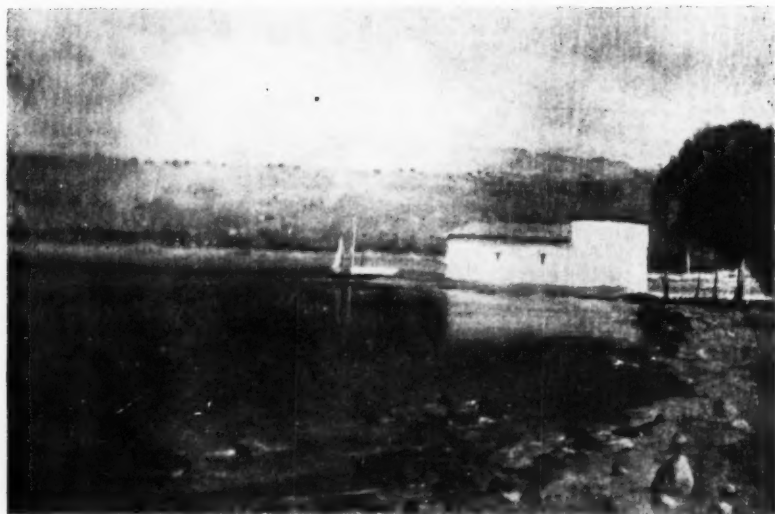
"Village Street." Oil.  
By Armando García Nuñez.





"Old Neighborhood." Oil.

By Armando García Nuñez.



"At Tequisquiengo Lake." Oil.  
By Armando García Nuñez.



"Jacal." Oil.  
By Armando García Nuñez.

# Un Poco de Todo

## IN SEARCH OF PIRATE GOLD

**T**HE lure of treasure buried by the pirates—bars of gold, precious jewels, doubloons, ducatoons, florins—this is the stuff on which to build a dream. Properly, the man of adventuresome spirit takes himself in hand at times and tries to turn the dream into a reality. He sets out in search of the mouth-watering booty. Perhaps he will chart a course to Old Providence Island in the western end of the Caribbean Sea to seek out the sunken cave where they say that the wild Welsh buccaneer of the South Seas, Sir Henry Morgan, buried his loot. Fair warning: The mouth of this cave is under seventy-five feet of water, water swarming with sharks and barracuda. Or perhaps the man with spirit a little less adventuresome may find Tortuga, Juan Fernandez, Jamaica, all island haunts of the bravoes of the sea, more to his taste.

There are books filled with the yarns of these hunts for treasure. Yet only rarely do we find the happy ending. Usually a storm interdicts or the chests are found but the treasure is gone.

But happy ending or not, the lure has not lessened its appeal through the centuries and it is with no surprise that we learn that another expedition is to sail in search of the treasure, 250,000. Pounds of it, which belonged to Capt. William Kidd, the most famous freebooter of them all.

Protesting his innocence to the last and proclaiming that he was convicted by perjures, Captain Kidd was swung from the gallows on Execution Dock, Old Wapping, London, and left there in the sun to dry. But before his death the Captain sent his jailer to Richard Cotte, the Earl of Bellomont, asking permission to lead an expedition to recover his treasure.

Wrote Bellomont in a letter: "I sent him word that he was the King's prisoner, and I could hearken to no such proposition, but I had the Gaoler to try, if he could prevail with Captain Kidd, to discover where his treasure was hid by him. But he said nobody could find it but himself, and would not tell any further."

Captain Kidd told "no further," but people have been searching for his treasure ever since, spurred on from time to time by the rumors of the finding of gold, silver and jewels.

It does seem a fact that some of Kidd's gold was found on Gardiner's Island, on the eastern end of Long Island, New York. Less likely are the other yarns, all of which have as a common denominator the tale of the slave who helped bury the treasure and then was himself killed and buried atop the chest. At one point this tale became intertwined with the legend of Sleepy Hollow. Laborers digging near the André Monument in Tarrytown unearthed a headless skeleton assumed to be the remains of the murdered slave. But, with no evidence of buried treasure near by, more likely it was the remains of the spooky equestrian who so unreasonably chased poor Ichabod along the lonely road.

Then there is the story of the fisherman of Long Island's Great South Bay who thrice dreamt of a near-by cove where Kidd's treasure was to be found. The third time was enough and up he got and rode in his boat to the place. Next morning he was found unconscious on his own threshold. His spade was near by with wet sand clinging to it but the boat was gone. The fisherman could explain nothing: where he had gone, where he had dug, how he had gotten home.

And another tale tells us that a farmer's wife near Rye, N. Y., on one properly dark and stormy night gave shelter to a seilor who next morning filled her apron with strange gold pieces—Kidd's gold, of course.

Now we have the report from England of a party of treasure hunters about to depart for the South China Sea. Included among the adventurers are a barber, a nurse and two lucky youths, fresh out of Oxford. The expedition is based on maps found sealed in the bottom of a sea chest belonging to Kidd. They were discovered by a lawyer in 1934 and have since been examined by the curator of the British Museum, who is convinced that the charts date to the seventeenth century and that the handwriting is similar to that of the pirate.

The island on which the treasure is buried is said to be 600 miles east of Singapore and, as in all good treasure hunts, the treasure seekers will not let their navigator have the exact bearings of the island until the ship is near by.

For our own part we would advise the young adventurers that they would do well to keep a weather eye open for a seafaring man with one leg, a parrot on his shoulder and a ready smile on his lips.

## MALTHUS CONFUTED

If present agronomical knowledge were sufficiently and universally applied, this planet could feed 4,000,000,000 people, roughly twice the world's present population, in the opinion of Prof. Artturi I. Virtanen, the noted Finnish chemist and Nobel Prize winner. Coming little more than a century after Malthus first published his gloomy views on the geometric increase of population and the arithmetic increase of food supply, this basically optimistic view contradicts sharply also recent concern over the rapid increase of world population, particularly in underdeveloped areas where the number of people habitually crowds the margin of subsistence and famine is not infrequent.

Professor Virtanen's statement, of course concerns itself only with potentials and implicitly recognizes that we are far from the ideal today. Over vast areas of the world the food intake of the average citizen is low even when measured only in calorie terms. Considered qualitatively, taking account of the consumption of proteins, minerals and vitamins, the picture is even worse, particularly since such deficiencies tend to debilitate those affected and make them vulnerable to many diseases.

To solve the problem of providing high-level diets for all the world's present population there is needed not only better diffusion and application of knowledge but also capital. A farmer has made an advance when he learns that fertilizers and insecticides will increase his crop yields, but unless he has the wherewithal to buy these and other supplies that knowledge is of little use. The need for capital is even more pressing when one thinks of applying modern labor-saving farm machinery on any extensive scale. Yet the state of agriculture is so primitive in many areas, even today, that much can be gained from relatively inexpensive

Continued on page 46

# Literary Appraisals

**BIRTH OF A WORLD. Bolivar in Terms of His Peoples** By Waldo Frank 432 pp. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

UNTIL recent years, we of the United States have not concerned ourselves much with the history of the rich continent to the south. We may know our Prescott and the history of the ruthless days of the Conquistadores, but scant is our knowledge of the even more dramatic years of the liberation. This is unfortunate, since familiarity with that period is necessary to an understanding of the American Republics of today; and we shall be stupid indeed if we do not seek that understanding. No living writer is so well qualified to tell the story and explain its importance as Waldo Frank, recognized by our southern neighbors as their most authoritative and understanding interpreter to the north.

His latest book on the great Venezuelan, Simon Bolivar, ranks in scholarship with the best he has done, and, to this reviewer, it is the most exciting of them all. Not only has he exhausted the sources of the archives, and saturated himself in the spirit of the people, but he knows, first-hand, the rugged mountains, the plains, the throbbing cities and the drowsy villages. The task he undertakes is no less than the recreation, in terms of the times of the tumultuous days when South America was convulsed with the struggle for independence from Spain. To paint the picture he has used a huge canvas. Goyaesque at times, with the flashing swords of fighting men, with ferocious mobs, with firing squads for the failures, and with the hectic conferences of disputatious leaders; and while he does full justice to Santander, San Martin and Sucre, it is the Plutarchian figure of Bolivar that emerges as the supreme liberator.

\* \* \*

And this not alone because of his sword, for his pen was far more potent. He fought less for forts and towns than for the minds of the people. In the struggle for independence he saw the necessity of persuading the mass of the people that, regardless of their origin, they were Americans. Here he rendered more essential service than any of his contemporaries. Even Miranda thought in terms of revolutionary Europe, and San Martin envisioned institutions of the European pattern. Bolivar's purpose was crystal clear—to people the American continent with Americans.

In a long succession of graphic pictures, the author has minutely followed Bolivar's development. We see Bolivar as a student in Madrid, passionately, combatively American, with a dash of the bravado of D'Artagnan; and in Paris in the salons of Mme. de Stael and Recamier, even the sparkle there could not divert him from his obsession on the liberation of Spanish-America, nor lift his gloom over the outlook. Here his political principles were in incubation. Napoleon was beginning to loom large, and while Bolivar admired him as a soldier, he hated him as a man. "Don't you see," he wrote, "that the one object of all he does is to seize power? The man tends toward despotism."

In the United States his passion for independence was accentuated, but he was not unmindful of the greater difficulties in the south, where the people were more closely bound to the King, and the Church was

aligned with the monarchy and Spanish rule. His problem, then, was to make the masses consciously American and his success in this was his supreme achievement. With this accomplished, with independence won, he could envision a really "new world," for, like Jefferson, he saw in the Western Hemisphere a clean slate on which to write drastic reforms impossible in the Old World.

Frank finds that only Jefferson "in intellectual scope ranks with Bolivar." Both had a philosophy and power with the pen, and both were keen psychologists. Thus Bolivar's proclamations to soldiers and peasants were flamboyant, "glaring with primary colors"; his letters to diplomats were "sinuous and cool"; his family letters were "precise, factual, yet tender." Mindful of his hero's contradictions, the author finds that he "could be noble and ignoble; an egoist and a man aware of, and transcending, egoism; a martyr of devotion and a monster of pride." Thus does the author subject him to a cold clinical analysis. Thus the Bolivar presented is not all white or black.

Bolivar's plan contemplated one federated nation of the entire hemisphere, including the United States. He foresaw seventeen republics in South America, knowing, what we in the United States do not yet realize, that the South Americans are not all of the same pattern. In Argentina he foresaw a military or oligarchic government, in Mexico "a long dictatorship," in Chile "stable constitutional law and progress," and he knew that the Peruvian aristocracy of the time would not tolerate democracy. When he died in 1830, at the age of 47, he despaired of his vision and his work. "We have plowed the sea," he said.

\* \* \*

Physically, Bolivar was unimpressive, all but frail, his passionate spirit dominating the flesh, but he consumed himself in his work. In his ephemeral affairs with women, only one had a real influence on his life. The portrait of the brilliant, provocative, picturesque Manuela, painted for us, is memorable. We see her shocking her contemporaries by galloping astride her horse accompanied by two Negro girls as "guards." Married to an Englishman, she left him to live with Bolivar as his mistress, and in replying to her husband's importunities to return, she paints her own portrait:

"I know I cannot be united to him (Bolivar) under the auspices of what you call honor, but do you really think me less honorable because he is my lover? I do not live in these social preoccupations that were invented to torture us. Leave us alone, my dear Englishman. Let's do this: In heaven we will marry again, but on earth, no. Is that a bad bargain? If so I will say that you are hard to please; in the celestial fatherland we'll pass an angelic life together, all spiritual—but as a man you are dull."

Waldo Frank has written not only the biography of a man, but of a continent. He has done it brilliantly and beautifully, for he has a gift for the vital word and the illuminating phrase. This is a fascinating narrative. It is a truly fine book—and one our own people would do well to read.

C. G. B.

**LOS ANGELES, a Guide to the City and Its Environs.** Southern California Writers Projects. Illustrated American Guide Series. 441 pp. New York: Hastings House.

**MONUMENT VALLEY AND THE NAVAJO COUNTRY, Arizona-Utah.** By Joseph Miller. 86 photographs. 96 pp. New York: Hastings House.

THE wanderlust must be raging through the offices of Hastings House, which published these three books on the Southwest within a few days of one another. The newest title in the American Guide Series, "Los Angeles" is a revised edition of one of the Federal Works Projects Administration's guides. Like the central schools, the bridges and highways built by the Government's pump-priming agencies during the depression, the guide series stands as an enduring monument to some very bad years. The new edition has been updated to take note of such things and events as World War II, television, the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation plant and the Kaiser Steel Corporation's steel mill at Fontana.

All these get into the book because Los Angeles is an expansive city with an amorphous way of life; while the Westerner may think New York City is everything north of Allentown, Pa., and east of the Hudson, the Easterner may just as well figure that Los Angeles comprises everything west of Denver and south of Clark Gable. This guide lends support to the Easterner's view of geography. It may also make him slightly envious not so much of the *joie de vivre* of Los Angeles residents as of the uninhibited way they express that *joie*.

Hastings House has thought seriously of the tourist who would absorb a solid, factual background before visiting a place as complex as Los Angeles. The typography of this guide is easy on the eyes and there is a minimum of the small reference-book type which frequently lessens the practical worth of such volumes.

Some first-rate reporting and writing enliven this book, particularly in the chapter titled "Pueblo to Metropolis," which recounts quite excitedly the growing pains of the city which was taken over by the United States from Mexico in 1846 and has been trying to return the compliment ever since. For proof see the steady extension of Los Angeles' hor and the Hollywood-type ranch houses now being taken almost for granted in the wilds of Westchester and the suburbs of Boston.

Still, there is one matter of personal disappointment. The guide gives an inkling into why Hollywood's radio audiences dissolve in loud laughter whenever a so-called comedian mentions Cucamonga. The Indian place name, it seems, has two translations: "place of many springs" and "lewd woman," the latter supposedly because of the wayward daughter of an Indian chief. Yet nowhere does the book explain that equally puzzling phenomenon, the violent audience reaction to mere mention of the town of Azusa.

Joseph Miller is a photographer, and his captions in "Monument Valley and the Navajo Country" reveal the good photographer's approach to his subject. He chose one of the most interesting sections of the country, both as to scenery and people, to work with, and he has done his work well. The photographs are the kind most tourists think they shot on their Southwestern vacations, but didn't.

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In "Mexico, Laredo to Guadalajara," Ernest Klee offers a photographic report of the highway from Laredo, Tex., to Monterrey, Mexico, traversing in 143 miles the desert and the foot-hills of the Sierra Madre range. A pleasant journey and a pleasant if uninspired set of photographs, with the emphasis on ruins, architecture and churches; the kind of pictures tourists are sometimes able to bring home.

P. J. C. F.

**TAILOR'S CHOICE.** By Carl Bottum. \$21 pp. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

**W**HEN the bottom fell out of the turtle market Capt. Jed Simpson of the Guarina decided to have a bang at gun-running. He took the chance in order to tide his crew over the lean months ahead. Jed was a first-rate skipper. He knew the Caribbean turtle grounds, and the harbors and reefs of the islands were as familiar as his compass card. But gun-running was another matter. There were too many shady characters in it and a heap too much skullduggery. A novice at the game, the odds were against him.

It was a long chance and he might swing for it, because he was a Cayman Islander and British and he was taking guns to Belize in British Honduras where plotters hoped to stir up revolution. Still he went ahead and arrived in the roadstead of Belize. Then he went ashore to meet Gonzales, who would tell him how and where to land his hot cargo. He found Gonzales and also Trench, a tricky old Englishman with a fascinating daughter, Nina Trench, as smart as they made 'em in Belize, took Jed into camp. Finally he escaped with the help of his faithful crew.

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**THE BRIGHT, BRIGHT WATER.** By William Case 304 pp. New York: Applet. n-Century-Crofts

I N the summer of 1945, in Fort-de-Paix—capital of the Caribbean island republic of St. Lo—Robert Mayo and Trent Snowden are like two winded tennis players wavering in middle court. After five years of rejection slips, Robert has abandoned fiction for inn-keeping, and he is trying to get up courage to return to Newark. He wants Trent to make the leap with him. But Trent is held captive by her love for hard-drinking Hank Stephenson.

Enter—home from the wars—Flanders Petrie, famous correspondent and friend of Robert, who, between drinks, bashes some unpleasant members of the American colony in the snoot and advises Trent to divorce herself from her sick love. Trent finally takes the advice but insists she must have one more night with Hank in the hills. Naturally, she misses the plane—and her hope of happiness with Robert. Having "played the base line for five years," he now storms the net in earnest and leaves this "wart of an island."

For good measure Mr. Case throws in an indifferent seduction, a lazy murder, an abortive Communist revolution and several hundred really egregious similes.

E W K.

**GUARACHA TRAIL.** By D. George Parker. 251 p.p. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

B OOKS are sometimes—and this is not meant vividously—born of mistakes. George Parker, for instance, who had wearied of the daily gunplay of Texas oil fields and decided to try silver mining, had

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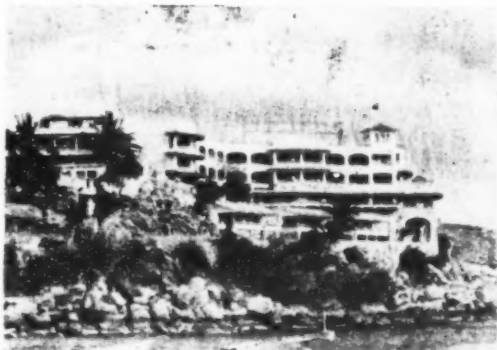
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two very human desires: to be left alone and to make a million dollars. But his miscalculation, which proved to be fairly fundamental, was to attempt this program in Mexico during the bloody aftermath of the Diaz regime.

Yet some good came of it after all. Dr. Parker became an expert gun and horse man to protect his investment and to keep from dying with his boots on. He had an aisle seat during one of the most chaotic and colorful periods of modern history. In the end he produced this book. It belongs to that body of writing which consists of memoirs by Americans who lived in a bygone or pre-tourist Mexico, a sparsely written, diverting item.

T L O.

**THE SOUND OF SPANISH VOICES.** By Lonnie Coleman. 252 pp. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

THE hero of Lonnie Coleman's third novel is a young novelist at work on his second. His Roger Haynes suffers from an earnestness bordering on emotional coma, but not even his creator's really polished and sometimes poetic style can make us take Haynes' muffled musings seriously.

In the pension in a Central American capital whither he has gone to heal his spirit, Haynes meets a promising collection of characters. Señora Fitzsimmons, the pension-keeper, has raised herself to the role of grande dame in the smalltime, driving her husband to suicide in the process. Estella, the Indian servant, is young and passionate but dedicated to the coming revolution. Eliot Morgan is a writer who sold out to popularity. Capt. Bradley Fremont, U. S. A., has taken a schoolmarm to wife and is now settled down to watch her develop an interesting strain of nymphomania.

The trouble is, very little happens, despite this standard type casting. Even the revolution is an affair of alarms off stage. That Coleman has striking gifts of language and imagery, that he can create strong scenes and exciting dialogue, he has certainly proved. Yet he disperses them in discussions, ruminations, dead retrospects and aborted symbols.

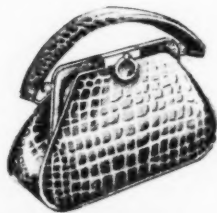
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# Current Attractions

## TEATRO DEL CARACOL

By Vane C. Dalton

**H**IDDEN away in a basement at the busy intersection of Calle de Palma and Republica de Cuba is Mexico's most unusual dramatic playhouse—its only authentic "little theatre"—the Teatro del Caracol. With a floor space of approximately twenty by forty feet, and a stage about half this size, it provides in a rather tight fashion sitting room for some hundred and thirty spectators. The actors perform on the tiny stage in the familiar atmosphere of a parlour-play, with the audience, even in the final row, sitting so close that the slightest faults become glaringly conspicuous.

Despite its name—"Theatre of the Snail"—there is nothing slow about its pace (This name, in fact, has no metaphorical implication; it stems from the fact that its entrance is by way of a spiral or "caracol" stairway). Indeed, this theatre, offering two shows a day—one beginning at 7.15 and the other at 9.55 P.M.—and usually drawing a capacity audience, today holds the record for the longest uninterrupted run of a dramatic play in this city. This play is by the distinguished Mexican author Rodolfo Usigli, and its title is "El Niño y la Niebla" ("The Boy and the Fog.")

At the time of this reporting this play has been running through seven months, and was approaching its 400th performance. And this, in the annals of our dramatic stage, is undoubtedly an outstanding record. True, the total number of spectators who have attended this play during these seven months would represent an approximate equivalent of a month's run in any standard size playhouse; and yet it is equally true that to keep a play going seven months and to attract some forty thousand spectators at admissions of eight and ten pesos to this odd little basement auditorium represents a veritable feat in our theatrical business.

For one thing, it reveals that this business, despite all adverse circumstances, is still alive—that this city has at least that many people who are willing to

put up with the deficiencies of this miniature playhouse in order to enjoy a good play. These people, moreover, have been attracted largely by word-of-mouth publicity, for the impresarios of the "Caracol" have spent very little money on newspaper space. The success of "El Niño y la Niebla" must be, in other words, attributed to the obvious fact that it is a good attraction, that it is a sufficiently good attraction to induce people to spend their money, even if they have to go out of their way and suffer other minor inconveniences.

It also signifies a personal triumph for Rodolfo Usigli, its author, who throughout his long and fruitful career has never written a play consciously striving for public approval. I am not sure if this is his best play, for I doubt if he has ever written anything that is as consistently good as his "Medio Tono," but I have no doubt that in writing "El Niño y la Niebla" he was guided by his uncompromising individual criterion—that he wrote what he wanted to write, regardless of boxoffice possibilities or of what people might think. That the play has been rewarded with popularity proves that our public is at last beginning to comprehend Usigli's viewpoint and to appreciate the kind of theatre he has been striving almost singlehandedly to create during fifteen years of indefatigable effort.

The theme of "El Niño y la Niebla" has an Oedipus slant. It involves the tragic adolescence of a boy in a household rent by hate and betrayal. The boy, after failing to murder his father, and thereby to fulfill his mother's secret wish, so that she may be free to go off with her lover, finally takes his life. His death brings on a crisis, though not a total disintegration, for the unfaithful wife casts out her lover and decides to remain at her husband's side.

The play is thus a heavy tragedy, unrelieved by the slightest element of hope in the end. The man and woman are not actually chastened by their tragedy.

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They are not redeemed by a newborn love. Their future together, bound solely by hate, is devoid of palpable promise. They will continue living under the same roof not because it is their wish but because both are irreparably injured by life and lack the moral strength for decisive action.

What to me, however, defines the veritable merit of this play is not its unusual theme—for it could be developed against the background of almost any other country—but the authenticity of its characters and environment. The true importance of this play, and of every other play Usigli has written, is based on the fact that it departs from sterile romantic traditions, that it deals realistically with Mexico and Mexicans in terms of social criticism, that it fearlessly projects certain aspects of native reality which up to comparatively recent years were never revealed on our stage. In this respect, Usigli, more than any other contemporary local playwright, has been a pioneer and forerunner.

Of the characters which figure in this play—whose action is developed in Durango in 1920—Guillermo Estrada, a frustrated architect who threw away his future in joining the revolution, and is now vegetating in a drab provincial midst while clinging to a dream that his political connections might some day enable him to return to Mexico City, is in my opinion the most convincing. As the type of muddled idealist, the Hamletic dreamer and sorry failure in all practical concerns of existence, he is decidedly real. In creating this character Usigli achieved a pathetic lifelike portrait of a middleclass Mexican who succumbs in the cross-currents of change he has helped to create. And Francisco Muller, who enacts this character, fully preserves its reality in his excellent interpretation.

Marta, Guillermo Estrada's errant wife—impersonated by Isabela Corona—a neurotic obsessed by a constant fear of imminent insanity, seems somewhat less convincing, perhaps because of her abnormality. Recognized as our outstanding "emotional" actress, Isabela Corona tends, I believe, to somewhat overact her part; or it might be possible that she lends this effect because of the diminutive proportions of the stage and its intimate closeness to the audience.

Carlos Vazquez, who impersonates their likewise neurotic son, achieves in his extremely difficult role, and especially in the first act, an excellent performance. Rolando San Martín, in the role of Mauricio Dávila, performs with admirable naturalness. In short, the play and its performance provide a stimulating and entirely satisfying show.

I am sure that the impresarios of "El Niño y la Niebla" did not deliberately select the Teatro del Caracol for its presentation, that they were not undertaking a novel experiment, but that they were compelled to utilize it because no other or more suitable playhouse was available. But it is well to recall that the improvised little theatre in Provincetown and a converted stable in Greenwich Village once served as the locale for a daring experiment which in subsequent years revolutionized the American stage. And it might be possible that the Teatro del Caracol is destined to fulfill a similar mission in Mexico.

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## Art and Personal Notes

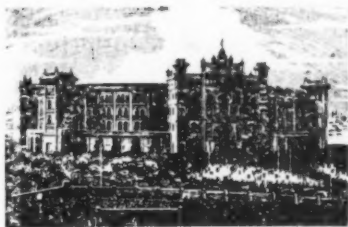
**T**HE National Institute of Fine Arts inaugurated its Popular Art Gallery, named "José Clemente Orozco," at Avenida Peralvillo No. 55, with a very impressive group exhibition of works by most of our leading contemporary painters. The catalogue lists the following names: Dr. Atl, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Raúl Anguiano, Federico Cantú, Fernando Castro Pacheco, Olga Costa, José Chávez Morado, Francisco Dosamantes, Francisco Goitia, Xavier Guerrero, Jesús Galván, Arturo García Bustos, María Izquierdo, Frida Kahlo, Amador Lugo, Nicolás Moreno, Guillermo Meza, Gustavo Montoya, Luis Nishizawa, Pablo O'Higgins, Carlos Orozco Romero, Juan O'Gorman, Feliciano Peña, Diego Rivera, Jesús Reyes Meza, Manuel Lozano, Juan Soriano, Rufino Tamayo and Alfredo Zalce.

Panoramic in scope, this exhibit extends to the spectator an excellent opportunity to view outstanding examples of modern Mexican art.

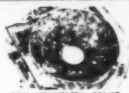
**G**ALERIA Arte Moderno (Plaza Santos Degolado N° 160) is currently presenting an exposition of drawings and paintings in oil and water color by the American artist James B. Southard. Semi-abstract in theme, the work of this painter stands out for its broadly conceived designs and forceful colors. Born in New York City, Southard has been living and working in Mexico during the past two years.

**T**HE Mexican-North American Institute of Cultural Relations (Avenida Yucatan No. 63) is offering at this time a select group of paintings by American war veteran art students in Mexico.

*méxico*  
also has...

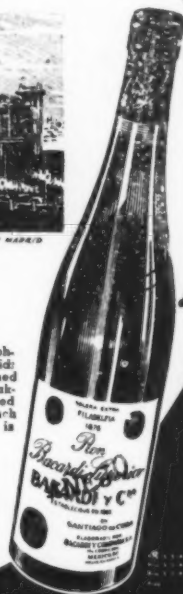


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**FROM OLDEN TIMES...**

**"Canal Aire" PIZA 1902**

**P** RINTS by a group of Cuban engravers are shown during this month at the Centro de Arte Mexicano (Republica de Cuba No. 75). The exponents—Anna Rosa Gonzalez, Armando Posse, Armando Fernandez, Angel Marti, Alberto Menchuca, A. Cardenas, Carmelo Gonzalez, Enrique Caravia, Eugenio Rodriguez, Holbein Lopez, Israel Cordoba, José Lopez, Luis Peñalver, Manolo Fernandez, Raúl Hernandez and Rolando Santana—form part of the Association of Cuban Print-makers, and this is their first local exhibit. Some of the works reveal freshness and force, in theme as well as technique.

**S** TILL LIFE paintings by old and modern Mexican artists comprise this month's exhibition at the Sala Bellas Artes of the Palacio de Bellas Artes. The exhibit comprises works by native artists of the 18th and 19th centuries, including canvases by such distinguished Colonial artists as Perez de Aguilar and the 19th century master, Agustin Arrieta, and among the contemporary generation, those by Olga Costa, Frida Kahlo, Rufino Tamayo, Carlos Orozco Romero, Gustavo Montoya, José Chavez Morado and Raúl Anguiano.

**R** OBERT PAUER, the American painter whose work was initially reproduced in our January issue, is having his first public exhibit at the Pan American Galleries, 502 Villita Street, San Antonio, Texas. Bauer, a retired businessman, commenced painting in Mexico several years ago. Without formal training, guided by innate talent and intuition, he has achieved in his depiction of Mexican subjects a highly interesting individual expression. The exposition has attracted a wide and favorable mention in the San Antonio press.

**R** OY MacNicol, the distinguished American painter, is now installed in his sumptuous studios, "Casa MacNicol," Avenida Juarez 59, Coyoacán. Occupying a Colonial mansion which is officially registered as a national monument, the artist's home includes a spacious gallery for the permanent exhibition of his work. MacNicol is at present finishing a large mural decoration on the walls of a loggia, titled "Human Kind," and composed along the principles of Geo-Segmatics, evolved by him.

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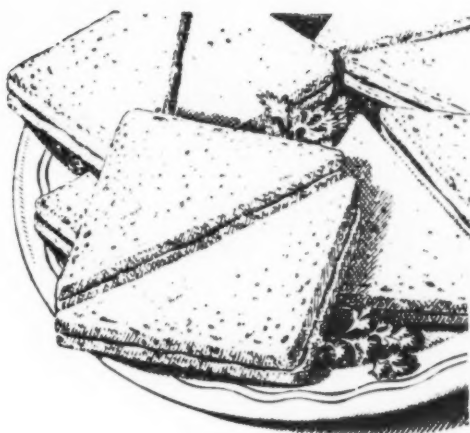


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### Patterns of an old City...

Continued from page 20

burdens, so that I may be completely free and, you might say, footloose when the time comes for me to go. I have bequeathed this humble house to you folks and I am turning her over to you because I understand clearly that it is the best I can do. I have made my decision.

"And yet, now that... I am afraid, Mother, that I am by nature given to indecision... That night five years ago, when the neighbors in the tenement next door found her—a week-old infant lying in rags in a dark hallway—and my wife brought her here, simply because there did not seem to be at the moment anyone else disposed to do it, and we fed her drops of boiled milk out of a spoon, it was like feeding some helpless little animal, a pup or kitten that might wander into your house. I had no thought that she would stay with us. I felt that it was my duty to notify the police... It was my wife who said we might wait a while. It was she, I suppose, who had actually made up her mind to keep her. We never had a child of our own, you know. But we had a good life together—forty-seven years. Maybe it was because we were both school teachers and were always in the midst of children that being childless was not a hardship. No, Frankly, I did not think we were going to keep her. My wife even then was in failing health, and it was quite a task. I don't know what we would have done about feeding her had it not been for a neighbor woman who helped out lending her breast... We called her Luchita, because that was the Saint day when we found her." At the sound of her name the child lifted her head and looked at them expectantly, then turned back to her game. "We thought it was a nice name; though we never managed to get her to a baptism! font—never, somehow, got to it..."

As he talked on, his lean, dark hand continuously twitching over his knee, the hollow sound of his words, falling futilely, like that much additional dust over the untidy and decrepit furnishings of the little room, aroused in him a sense of mortification, and he thought:

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These are merely the sentimental babblings of an old man who lacks the courage to face solitude. What am I talking about? he asked himself. She knows the whole story. The case is on record, and I have agreed to everything. And isn't this what I really want? Will it not give me, with this frightening solitude, the complete freedom I must have now that my time is running out? Is not this final solitude a privilege rather than a burden? Then why am I temporizing?

And yet he talked on: "She was nearly three years old when this young woman showed up. We never thought a thing like that could happen. But perhaps she was yielding to this strange compulsion which they say eventually brings a culprit back to the scene of his crime. She had talked to the neighbors, it seems, and that is how she found us. My wife was in bed, ailing, and we sat in this same room talking, while Luchita was playing on the floor as she is doing now. She did not come to claim her child," she said. She only desired to see it, to know about it. She had often wondered, she said, if the child were alive; though it had been impossible for her to try and find her. It was a fearful thing, Mother, to see her stare at the child without daring to touch it, without daring to speak to it. But it was hard to say whether it was joy or grief that she bore inside, for she neither laughed or cried. Her emotion seemed to be locked fast in a hard impenetrable shell. No, she said. She could not come sooner, for she had been serving a sentence in prison.

"She was circumspect, reluctant to talk about herself; though I am sure that whatever I was able to draw out of her was said without a shade of contrition. She accepted no personal blame. I would say that she revealed a characteristically delinquent mentality in blaming circumstance, in regarding her aberration as a misfortune and in attributing it to the cruelty and injustice of others. She was reticent and chary, in the manner of those who are habitually concealing the truth, and I did not strive to press her. Still, by talking to her—just talking, probably to relieve my tension, probably as I am talking to you now—I induced her to tell me some things about herself. Well, I suppose, one could blame circumstance in her case—one could attribute it to the external forces which go to shape individual fate.

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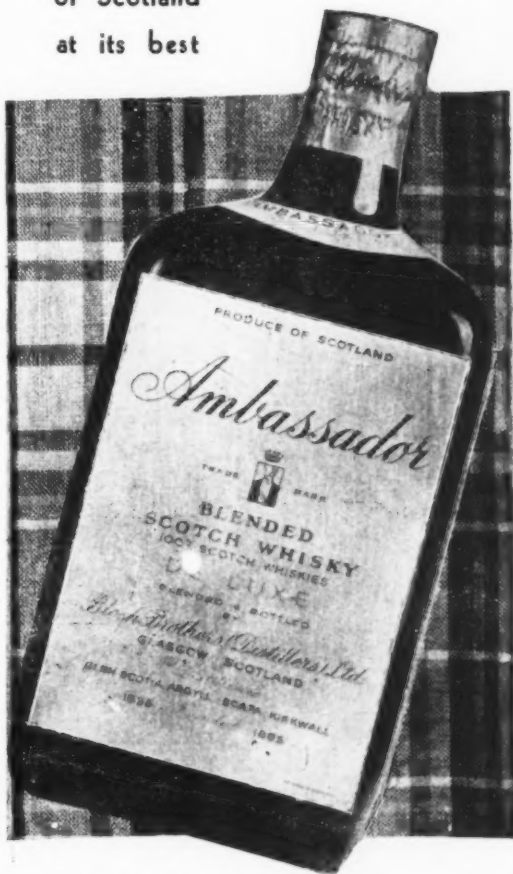


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"She hardly remembered her parents. I gathered that they were unstable and insolvent folk and that she had been neglected and grievously mistreated in her childhood. They drifted apart before she was grown, and she was virtually cast out on the streets. She was a pariah, a social outcast—the type that story writers sometimes describe as 'city scum,' 'flotsam,' 'sewer rats,' and so on. You can readily see, Mother, that the world she lived in was a hostile realm, and that fear and hate were in her case more normal emotions than love or kindness. Well, it seems that she was arrested for shoplifting before she was fourteen and committed to an institution. When she was released a few years later, it was not to emerge in a new world or to begin a new existence. Punishment has a way some times of breeding revenge rather than regeneration. She returned to a predatory jungle where her wits served as the sole means of survival. She . . ." he paused pointing at the child on the floor, "was a mere incident. Just something that happened. She met the man in a cantina where she was employed as a dancing waitress. A jungle encounter. She lived with him a while, but he deserted her before the baby was born.

"What pain, what senseless cruelty, is some times entailed in the creation of life! She told me that the final months of her pregnancy were a veritable hell. She lived from day to day sustained by the sole thought of riddance. So a few days after she left the charity hospital, she brought the child to the tenement next door and left it in the hallway. Thus she regained her freedom; but not for long. Soon after this she became involved in petty crimes and had to spend more than two years in prison."

The nun sat motionless, apparently listening, her gaze fixed in space. I am actually talking to myself, don Antonio thought. I am subjecting her to a needless ordeal. She came here on an errand, a routine task, and I am willfully retarding it. The thing is done, and there is nothing more to be said about it.

His throat felt very dry, an aching weariness settled at the base of his head, and he continued talking with difficulty. "So you probably understand, Mother, that this belated concern on her part is yet an urge for final riddance. She cannot provide for the child,



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and she is honest enough to admit her moral incapacity to assume a motherly charge. So, quite sensibly discounting me, she has entrusted this charge to your kindness... Well... I suppose that... that..."

"She will be all right with us, señor," the nun interposed with calm emphasis. "She will be all right. You have nothing to worry about."

Don Antonio met her patiently insistent gaze and stirred with a sudden briskness. "Why yes. Yes, of course. She will be all right... So now, I suppose you would like to... to go ahead. I am afraid I have kept you longer than necessary... Please forgive me. I have let myself talk without considering that you are busy... that you, eh..." He rose and looked around the room as if he were surveying utterly strange surroundings. "Now, eh... I..."

"Yes," the nun said, also rising. "It is quite a distance to San Jeronimo, and by the time we get there it might be too late for dinner... So, with your permission, we will go now... And you need not bother about fixing up her clothes or anything. She will be provided with everything—her uniform and undergarments. She need not take a thing... That is, of course, if there is something, some playthings, that you would like to have her bring along, why it would be all right... Anything that you might want her to keep..."

Taking hold of Luchita's hand, don Antonio gently pulled her up to her feet. "Something she might take along... Why yes. Sure. These things she has been playing with. She might wish to keep them. Yes, of course..." And getting down on his knees, while Luchita looked on chortling amusedly, he commenced to gather the bottle caps off the floor, spilling them again, fumbling clumsily, embarrassed and annoyed with himself because his hands trembled awkwardly and a watery blur obscured his vision.

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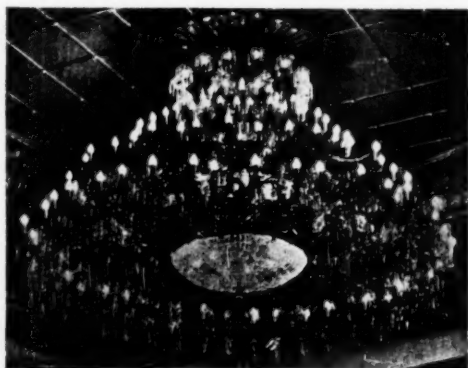
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**Un Poco de Todo . . .**

*Continued from page 31*

new techniques or from such changes as better timing of farm operations and better matching of soil and crops.

What these comments point to, of course, is the vast area for agricultural improvement which can yet be obtained. In agriculture as in industry the export of knowledge plus capital can work miracles if they are coordinated with willingness of those who need these essentials to accept and apply them.

**The Dance en México . . .**

*Continued from page 27*

ced in circles, at other times in straight lines, and although both men and women participated frequently in their dances, generally the men alone did the dancing.

The nobles, in these ceremonies, displayed sumptuous costumes, while ordinary men disguised themselves like animals with garbs fashioned from feathers or furs, and they covered their faces with masks made of wood or leather.

The mask possesses the miraculous faculty of eternalizing a grimace and awakening in the expectant spirit of the people a perfect emotion. A whirl, a dip, a few steps performed by a masked artist give him greater plasticity, envelope him in a wave of mystery. The mask is the materialization of an idea created by fantasy or mysticism. It lends superreality to the dance. It makes it almost super-human. For this reason the ancient Indians presented many of their divinities, such as the god of the wind, wearing masks. The masks of jade, of rock crystal, of coral, of mosaic, of bone with inlaid turquoise or mother-of-pearl are votive offerings found in the ancient tombs.

If the mask is the essence of the disguise, the dress of the Mexican dancer is the complement in creating that super-realist atmosphere. It is the suggestion of the divine.

\* \* \*

In Greece the lightness of the tunic, in India the necklaces and bracelets, in Persia the thick veils emphasizing the sensual whirling of the dances, are the ornaments which place the bodily enchantments in relief. On the other hand, the rigidity, geometry, flat colors, extravagance of costumes of the Mexican dancers, inspire the forgetting of nature and point out the metaphysical qualities. There are the dancers of

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Michoacan, for instance, covering their faces with masks, as in the Danza de los Viejos, or with brightly-colored handkerchiefs as in the Danza de los Moros. There are dancers of Oaxaca, wearing long, soft feathers of Mexican birds, feathers which shine in the sun.

Are not the costumes of the Indians inhabiting the villages of the shores of Lake Patzenaro surrealist? Tunics with the appearance of church decorations, headdresses like those of a Persian king, and yellow shoes with ornaments like spurs sounding as they dance on tiptoe.

There is worship, fetishism, enveloped in the smoke of the copal resin's incense and in the mystical drunkenness produced by the pulque and sacred herbs: the peyote and the mariguana. These were heavenly drugs for the Indians, because they inspired them, transfigured them and bore them to the realms of the divine. Never did the ancient races reveal the enchantments which these sublime poisons produced in them, so indispensable for their rituals and dances.

The peyote or jicuil, the mariguana, the pulque set fire to the spirits, made the blood circulate with more fluidity, produced mirages indreamed of, transported souls to ecstasies and oblivion. The inebriation produced by these drugs must have been superior to the drunkenness of the Greeks when they tipped their brimming cups of wine to honor Dionysius and Aphrodite.

For the ancient Mexicans the peyote became a religious symbol. They worshipped it as fervently as though it were something celestial. Legend has it that this drug, since the beginning of the world, was presented by the gods to the Mexicans to cure their wounds of love, to help them forget their sadness, and that

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they as mortals, on partaking of them, might be transfigured into divinities. And since the Mexicans had no words with which to describe the sensations which the peyote produced in them, they expressed them by rhythm, leaps, dances. Thus indeed was born the dance of the jicuil.

\* \* \*

"Are you acquainted with the dances of the Indians of Chihuahua?" a pretty dancer asks me.

"I know some of them," I answer. There is so great a variety of dances in Mexico that it is impossible to know all of them. Each region, each village, has invented a manner of expressing its feeling. But in the ultimate analysis, the dances of Chihuahua, like those of Oaxaca, like those of Jalisco, like those of Guerrero, in spite of their different steps, their distinct cadences and gestures—all spring from a single theory, an identical ideology, and all of them conserve in their core the same principle—worship.

The Indian dancers perform unconsciously, mechanically. Their rhythms are slow, sad, weary, the same as the sound of their drums and the tones of their chirimias—interminable notes, repeated to monotony. The attitudes, grimaces, movements of the dancers are stereotyped.

The faces of the dancers, rigid as though made of pasteboard, need no masks. Their bronzed, yellow faces acquire expressions of incredible hardness which border upon the ridiculous. The theory of hermetic faces, mysterious, immovable, unthinking. Never does a smile illumine their features; never are they transfigured by an expression of sensuality, joy, sorrow, rage, hate nor passion.

They dance, they dance ceaselessly to the beat of their primitive instruments. More than anything else the Indian dances emphasize idolatry. And the Mexican dancer is an idolator, superstitious and unconscious.

In Zapotecan, an ancient village in Southern Jalisco, the Indians dance in both religious and popular celebrations. For eighteen consecutive days the song-



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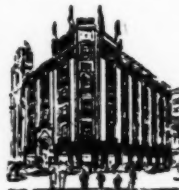
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ros dance. They spend the entire novena of Santo Patrono dancing. Night after night they end their dances drunk with tequila and ponche de grandia.

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### Our Hemispheres First Woman Poet . . .

Continued from page 19

Juana continued her higher studies in every field of learning, though with many difficulties even in her retirement:

"Once they persuaded a holy and very simple-minded mother superior to order not to study: I obeyed her some three months of her tenure of office, as far as not opening a book goes, but as to not studying at all, that was not in my power, for I can't do that. For even though I studied not in books I studied all things that God created. I saw nothing without reflection, heard nothing without contemplation \*\*\*

"Not even sleep is free from this continual motion of my imagination, rather does it work more freely and unencumbered \*\*\* composing verses, arguing with delicate reasonings which I have reached asleep better than awake."

This thwarted intellectual, with a gift for rhyming and perhaps memories of girlhood affairs, was a good



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nun. She wrote a number of long poems on religious themes; her life was exemplary, she was much loved by the sisters, and died in 1695 of disease contracted while nursing victims of the plague.

\* \* \*

In the National Library there is a painting of Sor Juana, showing her beautiful, intellectual, and spiritual, and very charming.

But when Sor Juana saw this portrait, thinking of the brevity of human life and the vanity of all things human, she wrote:

It is a foolish effort wasted here,  
A fading task—and if one rightly sees,  
But corpse, and dust, and shadow; nothingness.

Let us, with her Mexican compatriots, honor her as the first woman poet of our hemisphere.

### The Great God Corn . . .

Continued from page 18

significance. For these little figures are not just toys. To the Indians they are people, caricatures of themselves, who were born of corn and were made of corn and who must live on corn. One of our Mexican friends believes that the roots of his country's culture are not to be found in the museums, or in the relics of the past, but in the cornfields. Corn, he says, has been the motivating force in the history and tragedy of Mexico; even its future is still linked with it. The revolution was not fought so much for the freedom of man as for the freedom to have land on which to grow corn. Yet as in everything that happens in Mexico, there is an ironic side to it.

When we think of corn, we think of corn on the cob, young tender ears that taste good at the dinner table. Or we open a can of creamed corn and serve it as a vegetable with a meat dish. Sometimes, as in the south, we make cornbread of it. But corn is only incidental in our lives; we do not live on corn and we do not depend entirely upon it.

In the corn belt of Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota and Iowa, what they produce for the dinner table is insignificant. They grow corn principally for industrial purposes and for animal feed. They grow it also for its oil content, for its syrup, for its starch, for its meal, for its alcohol and for the dextrose products made from it. Corn as the mainstay of the family table is not important and if necessary we could even do without our breakfast cereals. But commercially for its animal feed and industrially for numerous products,

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it is essential and the crops often get as high prices as wheat. It pays to plant corn; the Middle West has prospered on corn.

In Mexico something else has taken place. Corn is not grown in any particular section of the country; it is raised in every part of Mexico. In fact one of the great qualities of corn is that it does as well at sea level as at extreme altitude. It is easy to grow and hearty, and once planted it requires little attention. As food, it is reported, it can sustain a family of five persons for a full year on less than two and a half acres of planting.

This is one of the reasons why there are no large farms, no great agricultural fields of corn. Every Mexican, every Indian, who has a parcel of land, puts in his milpa. Corn is not raised for feed or commercial purposes in Mexico. It is planted principally for human consumption. No part of it is wasted. Even the black parasitic growth that corn sometimes gets is used and prepared as a delicacy.

Corn is seldom eaten green. Once in a while corn on the cob is served, but not often. Mexican corn is not tender and it is not raised to be eaten fresh. Practically all Mexican corn is allowed to ripen on the stalks. Not until then are the ears picked, the husks removed and the dried corn which is not to be used right away stored, still on the cob, for the winter season.

But maíz cannot be eaten raw and it must go through rather an elaborate process before it is made ready as edible food. Neither can large portions of it be prepared for future use; the very nature of its composition makes it necessary to have it prepared fresh daily. In Indian villages, each household prepares and grinds its maíz. In larger towns and cities the finished dough is purchased or the maíz is ground in mills. But the grinding is only a step in the process.

Before anything can be done with the dried corn it must be placed in a solution of two parts water to one of lime and then heated for twenty to forty-five minutes. Boiling is avoided as this will produce a dough which adheres to the hands in the making of the tortillas later. Following the cooking it is allowed to rest overnight. The next morning the mixture, now known as nixtamal is washed three or four times to remove most of the lime. Finally the kernels, no longer hard, are ground by hand or by a power-driven mill and the result is a thick dough or masa. From this dough are made the thinly patted cakes that when baked on a flat hot surface become tortillas.

The tortillas are removed from the hot plate before they have browned and while they are still pli-



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able. In eating, the Mexican often curls the tortilla and uses it as a spoon, biting off a portion with each mouthful. The tortilla is sometimes rolled around a mixture of meat and chili or meat and beans to form a taco, which is the Mexican sandwich. The tortilla dough is also used as the basis for many Mexican dishes, such as tamales and enchiladas.

To be good the tortilla must be eaten immediately after it is cooked and while it is still warm. In the cities the tortillas already made can be purchased from a tortilleria but then they have to be reheated and they are never the same. It is said that only the very rich, who can afford a tortilla woman, and the very poor, who make them as they eat, can have fresh tortillas.

Contrary to general belief, medical investigators have found that while the tortilla is not the best food in the world, it is far from the worst. As a matter of fact it is probably better for the Mexican diet than white flour bread. Ordinary corn averages 9.0 mg. per cent of calcium, but when it is prepared as a tortilla it averages twenty times as much. Corn is also high in phosphorous substance, averaging 275 mg. per cent, which is important along with the calcium for the formation of teeth and bones.

The high calcium content of the tortilla results from the treatment of the corn with lime water. The Mexicans have achieved, according to medical investigators, an adequate calcium intake by this food practice, for an average daily consumption of 280 grams of tortilla furnishes more than 500 mg. of calcium. When supplemented with chili, which is rich in some vitamins, corn in tortillas becomes a nourishing food and when eaten in large quantities, as happens in Mexico, it is said to be easier to digest than an equivalent amount of bread.

It would appear, therefore, that because corn is so much a part of the Mexican diet and because there is so much demand for it, raising it would be profitable. Such is not the case. Corn is the most unprofitable crop which can be planted in Mexico and its market price is among the lowest. As a result, while the population of Mexico has more than doubled in the last fifty years, corn production, instead of increasing, has steadily dropped.

No one grows corn to sell if he can possibly avoid it, and this in a country where practically everyone eats it. The reason of course is the price, which runs on the average of around 60 pesos per hectare (two and a half acres) as compared to rice which brings in 323 pesos, potatoes 520 pesos and sugar cane 536 pesos per hectare. Tomatoes, chick peas, bananas, wheat, cotton are all much more profitable to raise than corn. In fact, corn can be purchased cheaper from the United States or from Argentina than it can be grown in Mexico.

On the face of it, this doesn't make sense. Labor is cheaper than in the United States or Argentina; there is plenty of land on which to plant it, and it grows well and easily in Mexico. Why then should there be a scarcity of corn, and why can it be raised cheaper and better in the United States and in Argentina?



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Those who have opposed the breaking up of the haciendas and the distribution of land to the people have a ready answer. They say that you cannot turn over land to the Indians and expect them to work it. There was no scarcity of corn, they argue, during the prosperous days of Porfirio Díaz dictatorship.

But, as the records show, that is not true. Mexico imported corn during the time of Díaz and the haciendas, and when the population was half what it is today. What is true is that the land was given to the peons who worked on the haciendas and who still plant their patches of corn for their own use as they always did. For corn was never raised on a large scale by the haciendas.

The Mexican corn problem actually resolves into a paradox: too many people grow too little corn and too many people eat too much corn.

In other words, every Indian, every peon, every small farmer, every Mexican in the lower economic scale who has a piece of land, plants corn. But most of that corn is for his own use; he sells very little of it and only when circumstances force him to do it. He does not raise more, not because he is lazy, not because he doesn't know how to work the land, but because if he sells it he gets practically nothing in return for his labor. Corn, in a land where it is the principal food, has no great value.

The result is that people who have land, who grow corn, have all they need. But the people who have no land, who do not raise corn, find themselves without it. Why should we plant it in quantity, say the farmers and the Indians, when we can get more for our chickens, or eggs, or tomatoes than for corn? Why should we, say the agrarian workers, with the land the government has given us, plant corn when we can raise cotton or rice? Why should they, says the government bank, when the other crops are much more profitable and a better investment?

There are still some hacienda owners in Mexico with large pieces of farming land. Why should we grow corn, they ask, when there is no profit in it? It is better to plant orchards. Besides, they argue, if there should be further land reform the government would hesitate at expropriating orchards that need care, supervision and money. No, corn raising is not for us. Let them raise it on their milpas. Let them have their corn, and if they don't have it, well, then let them eat bread.

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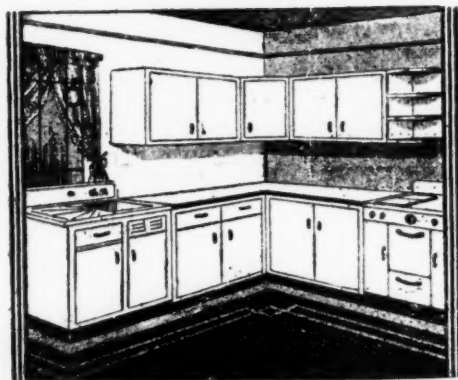
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They feel that way now and they felt very much that way fifty years ago. For even at the turn of the century, 80 per cent of the Mexican haciendas employed the ancient Egyptian plow to work the land. Oxen and sometimes Indian peons were used to pull it. Corn was planted by making a hole in the ground with a wooden stick, dropping the seed and covering it with earth again. It was seldom cultivated or fertilized and new breeds of seed were never introduced.

Most of the haciendas have disappeared and, in many places, modern tractors have substituted for the wooden plow and the peons. But for the cornfields there are not tractors, no automatic seeders, no machine-driven cultivators; nothing but the same wooden stick, the same browned hands digging into the ground, the same human sweat that produced it thousands of years ago.

Even the corn itself has not undergone much change or improvement and only recently has there been any effort made toward revitalizing the seed. For corn deteriorates in quality, in size and its annual yield. Freakishly, it is both feminine and masculine and, as one botanist has put it, corn is not only the husband of many wives but at the same time it is the wife of many husbands. It is one of those rare plants that fertilizes itself, and because of its constant intermarriage among its own it gradually degenerates. It needs to be crossbred.

In the United States, much work has been done to improve corn. As a result it has increased in quality and its annual yield has been doubled many times over. In Mexico this has not been done, though there are now indications that the government has taken a serious interest and may actually do something about it. But it will be no easy task. It will be confronted with many problems, the principal one the introduction of new seed.

The government representatives cannot go to the villages and say to the Indians and the small farmers, Here, take this maíz which we give you as a present. From it you will grow better maíz and more of it. The Indian and the small farmer, always suspicious of the government, will accept the seed but the chances are that he will give it to his chickens or to his pigs instead of planting it. It is difficult for him to understand that the government really wants to help him.

\* \* \*

An easier and more successful approach might be: Look here, Pedro or José, we are going to give you some maíz seed. You plant three or four rows of it.

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Then later we'll be back and you tell us if it grows any better than that which you have planted. After it has been given to an Indian, he may or may not plant it. He may think it over a number of times, but I believe that in the end he will plant the new seed for he would be too curious not to do otherwise. But he will do it with doubt and suspicion. He has learned by experience to be shy of gifts, and corn which is so close to him would be no exception. Yet if this new corn is better, if it has a greater yield, he will accept the change and the following year he will plant his entire crop of it.

This may not be the only way to persuade him, but at least it would be start. Obviously the government will have to do something about it or the production of corn will continue to drop. It is not healthy economies for Mexico to keep on importing food to feed itself when there is no need of it.

Overproduction and a surplus is also not the answer, and neither is the answer to be found in buying from a foreign country because it is cheaper. Mexico, because it depends on corn and because it is a corn-consuming country, should first grow enough corn to feed itself; then it can consider the raising of other crops to sell for export. But it is not helping itself as long as it has to buy the corn it eats from the U.S. or from Argentina.

Such Latin American countries as Brazil, El Salvador and Guatemala are in an even more precarious position than Mexico. They rely principally on coffee for the wealth and prosperity of their countries. Over-surplus of coffee, a bad crop or a drop in price can become a national calamity. So these countries, through the government, make an effort to control the price and the quantity of coffee exported.

Mexico, which is in a far better situation, might nevertheless follow these countries in the matter of corn. If the Mexican government, for example, subsidized or established a price control on corn so that it would be profitable to raise it, there might never be a scarcity of it. If the Banco Ejidal of Mexico, which lends money and machinery and provides other assistance to the agrarian workers who raise cotton and sugar, would do the same thing for corn, it would also tend to prevent a scarcity. Mexico would not have to import corn. It would, for the first time since the days of the Aztecs and Mayas, feed itself.

It is about time, too, that the Mexican Indian learned that man was not made of corn; that he need not pray to the maize and rain gods for a good crop; that there are better ways to plant corn than with the wooden stick of his ancestors; that there are other things for the nourishment of his body than corn; that spiritually and economically he need not rely entirely upon corn.

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### Queretaro . . .

Continued from page 16

taro, with its four great upper windows and its three fluted balconies. It was the sort of house from which one might expect to hear Viennese waltz tunes lilting from music boxes. I imagined the house had belonged to the eighteenth-century Marqués whose statue dominated the square, the gentleman who was the principal donor of the great aqueduct. An inscription on the monument gave the information that the work on the aqueduct was begun the day after Christmas 1726, and the job completed on October 15, 1735. The construction, then, took almost nine years. The inscription stated precisely that the project cost \$131,091; of which amount the benevolent Marqués contributed \$88,287 out of his own pocket. Considering the length of building time and the five miles of masonry, the cost seems extraordinarily small for so great a work.

"But we Mexicans have always managed to get good value for our money," Esperón said as we hailed a cab to drive us to the city's edge to look at the aqueduct. "By paying next to nothing for labor," he added ironically as we got in.

Near the aqueduct terminal at the highest spot in town is the Church of the Cross, and adjoining it is the convent, which Maximilian's troops used as a barracks during the siege. When Querétaro fell on May 15, 1867, General Mariano Escobedo's troops took possession and used it as their barracks.

Passing the town's high-walled cemetery on the right, we curved down the little hill to flattish country, and there stretching in front before us obliquely was the aqueduct. It was like something conceived by the extravagantly romantic mind of Lord Dunsany. I thought of a single-file procession of toast-colored giants bearing the five-mile-long water trough on their shoulders. Each majestic arch rose to a height of fifty feet and was triumphal in itself. Pictures of earth and sky were set in countless colossal frames. The same scene, with only slight variation, infinitely framed, with sometimes a whitewashed hut, or a man sowing seed, or a group of white goats grazing against a background of emerald and cobalt.

The closer one came, the more impressive was the magnitude. As I surveyed the miles of dark-yellowish brick with its patina of subdued topaz and mellowed amethyst, I thought there was little in Mexico to surpass this aqueduct in memorableness. I thought of Spengler, who had said, "I prefer one Roman aqueduct to all the Roman temples and statues." And it was he who had written: "I would sooner have the fine mind-begotten forms of a fast steamer than all the pickings and stealings of present-day 'arts and

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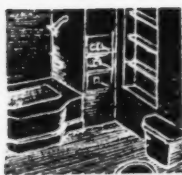
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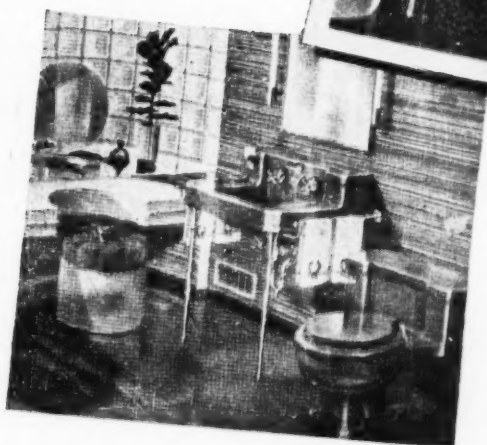
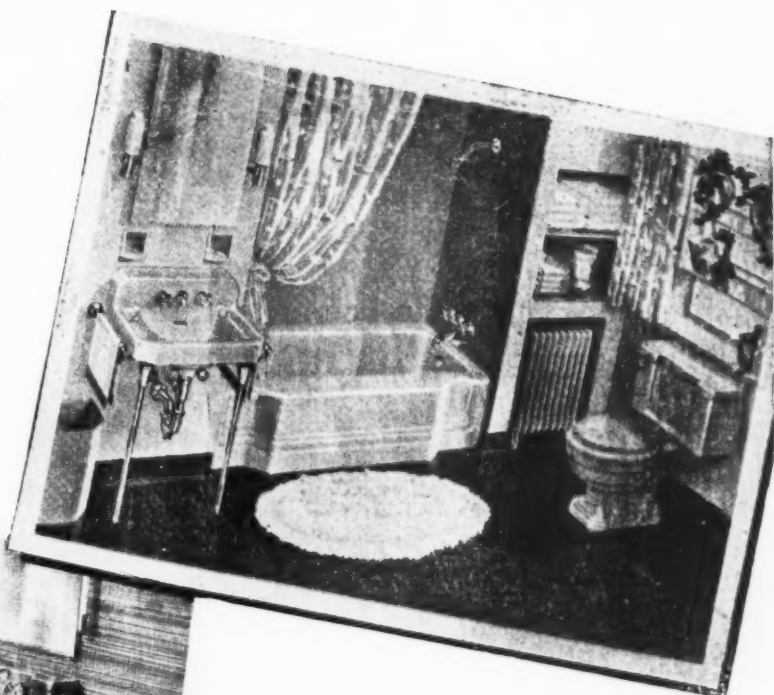


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crafts, architecture and painting included." What collections of old Mexican arts and crafts, what series of murals done in the last two decades, could measure up to the impression of the simple grandeur of this project conceived and executed by eighteenth-century engineers?

The road to Mexico City went through and under one of the arches. We stopped the car and got out to stand beneath a massive arch and look up fifty feet to its capstone. There came to me lines of Humboldt in his *Essai politique sur la Nouvelle Espagne*: "Wherever nations are divided into castes, and wherever men do not enjoy the right to private property and work solely for the profit of the community, we shall find canals, roads, aqueducts, pyramids, huge constructions of every kind. But we shall also find that these people, though for thousands of years they may preserve the air of external prosperity, will make practically no advance in moral culture, which is the result of individual liberty."

Well, whatever, the lack in moral significance, this aqueduct was not constructed as a sop to one man's vanity or as supplication to Deity. It was erected for a most practical community purpose—to bring pure water from the uncontaminated mountains to quench men's thirst. What church-builder or library-founder had made a better gesture in behalf of his fellows than the old Marqués?

We drove under the aqueduct, and out a few miles into the countryside up to a slight eminence where we could get the full sweep of panorama. We could see where one end of the aqueduct disappeared into the man-made city and the other vanished into the God-made hills. As we returned, the high uncompromising sun turned the flowing grass of the fields into a green becalmed sea. To the right, a flock of sheep,

shepherded by two companionable old men, reflected the sharp silver-arrowed light in all their tight curls. To the left, a young woman sat on the roadside placidly suckling a baby at high noon. Birds, gathered about some golden grain spilled in the road, scattered like a fling of seed as our car bore down upon them. Countryfolk, dressed in their Sabbath best coming home from church, passed under the roadway arch like Lilliputians in Swift's satire.

The aqueduct could not last forever to bring water or to make memorable the landscape; but it would doubtless be there long after these people and their children and their children's children would be above the surface of the earth to pass to and fro beneath it, with different desires pulling them this way and that.

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### The Inspector . . .

Continued from page 13

"He moved the dry wall, pues, and that is very hard work, as I can tell you. He moved it in, so that the three trees were just outside the wall, in the roadway."

"But then I should have thought that the Inspector of Roads would have had the whole trees cut down."

"Oh, no," said Venustiano. "The Inspector of Reafforestation was there too, and he wouldn't have allowed that. You see, they were only just outside the wall. Look, like those two trees there."

I followed Venustiano's eye along the road to where two pomegranates appeared to be growing just outside the dry wall surrounding his land. I noticed the loosely laid stones where the wall curved inward around the trees, and that there was plenty of earth scattered about.

"But of course," added Venustiano, "one can always pay the inspectors five pesos not to call at your house at all, if you have five pesos, that is, though I expect they'd charge you more."

But I decided I wouldn't pay anybody anything. I wanted to see if it were possible just to obey the law and not be fined. I went round my land carefully with Cayetano and pointed out to him which branches to lop and which not. It took most of the afternoon, but by the end of it I was satisfied that neither inspector could have any genuine grounds for fining me.

"And now," said Cayetano, proudly viewing the work, "at all places where we cut the branches I'll cover the wounds with mud so that they won't shew."

"There's no need to do that," I said. "We haven't cut any main branches."

"You will know, señor," said Cayetano. "The Señores Inspectors will be here tomorrow."

But they didn't come the next day. Or the next. Or the day after that. We heard they were still in Chapala. They had started out from Guadalajara with a flurry of efficiency and had collected a lot of money from the villages on their way to Chapala. They had even fined the priest in Ixtlahuacán.

A week later the Inspector of Roads passed through Ajijic on his way to Jocotepec. He didn't stop in the village at all. But the same day, a little

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before lunchtime, the Inspector of Reafforestation called at my house.

He was a small round man, very genial, and every time he opened his mouth to speak a gold tooth flashed in the sunlight. He seemed interested in his job and was very well informed. I walked round my land with him, and he expressed himself entirely satisfied with what I had done and was able to give me some good advice about grafting grapefruit onto citron.

"I only wish others would care for their trees as you do," he said. But these of here are just like so many mules without heads. Why, you must have doubled the value of your property already. How much do you consider it to be worth now?"

We had a little glass of tequila together in the patio, and before he left he fined me ten pesos for destroying the nut tree that Silvanito had burned in order to kill the tilenante.

### The Waters of Anahuac . . .

Continued from page 12

airport.) Vegetables and flowers were brought by canoe from Xochimileo along the Canal de la Viga. These two canals ran, the first from the east, the second from the south, right into the city, and these were supplemented by other canals. Criss-crossing the city, they made it colorful, though hardly helped to make it sanitary. In addition to refuse, even dead bodies were sometimes seen floating in their muddy waters. Furthermore, in stormy weather the waters of Lake Chalco were too dangerous to be navigated by the flat, flimsy canoes used by the Indians, and there were no sturdier boats in Anahuac.

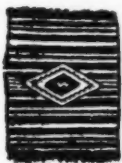
The Canal de la Viga—or rather, its shore—was in Colonial days a fashionable promenade. Every day of the week and even more so on Sundays, the wealthy Spaniards, dressed in all their finery, "took the air"

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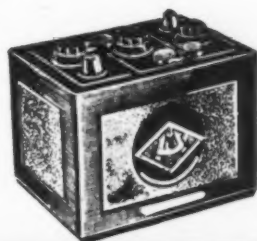
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in their elegant carriages along the Paseo de la Viga. Only the Spaniards could afford such carriages, and there was, moreover, a law to the effect that no Indian was allowed to own a horse.

There lived in the city at this time a man who called himself Enrico Martínez. He was of German origin, and his name had originally been Heinrich Martin. He was a scientist, a writer and apparently a practical engineer, though by profession he was known at the time as a printer.

Enrico Martínez presented a plan to the Viceroy for the drainage of the Valley. It was based on the same idea that had been previously developed by Francisco Gudiol, though it was much less costly.

Enrico Martínez proposed to drain the lakes in seven different places. By an alternate system of ditches and tunnels he planned to make Lake Texcoco run into Lake Zumpango; to make Zumpango run counterwise into the Cuautitlan River; to divert the Cuautitlan so that it would run into the Tula River which eventually empties itself into the sea.

There is no mention anywhere in this project of pumps. Apparently the impossible task of making the waters of Texcoco run uphill into Zumpango was to have been accomplished by means of taking that water underground. Then, to get the water of Zumpango out of the valley, Enrico Martínez proposed to make a "tajo" or cut through the lowest mountains which are to the north of the valley. He would start this "tajo" near a place called Nochistongo.

The plan presented by Martínez was approved by the Viceroy, the illustrious Don Luis de Velasco, and on a day in October, 1607, the news was eried in the streets of Mexico: "Hear ye! All negroes, mulattos, mestizos and all other kinds of people who wish to lease themselves for work should present themselves for employment." All owners of slaves were asked for their loan. Good payment was promised and the workers, "would be fed to some satisfaction."

To finance the project the sum of three hundred thousand pesos was raised, and a heavy tax was imposed upon the sale of wine, "which much annoyed the Bacchanalian inhabitants" of Mexico City, writes Francisco de la Maza in his biography of Enrico Martínez.

The work was begun in November, 1607. Fourteen years later the task was nowhere near finished. By then it had cost one million pesos and literally thousands of lives.

The subsoil of the valley is treacherous. It is apt to contain unexpected hazards such as underground water or sliding, soft, almost uncontrollable sand. Tunnels would often collapse, burying the workers under

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them. Frequent land-slides also could destroy in a few minutes the work of months and years.

Just exactly what happened, nobody knows. The distinguished visitor to Mexico, Alexander von Humboldt, was very much interested in the work that his compatriot and fellow-scientist was doing here. Humboldt visited the drainage work and he later wrote that Enrico Martínez had not built the ditches and tunnels in accordance with the high standards of his own specifications. The ditches and tunnels were not reinforced. They were likely to give way, Humboldt wrote, during a particularly heavy rainy season.

Perhaps nobody knew it better than Enrico Martínez, himself. Without saying anything to anybody and without asking the Viceroy's permission to do it, early in the summer of 1629, he blocked the outlet through which he had been draining Zumpango into the Cuautitlan River. When the Viceroy learned this, he was so angry that he put Martínez into prison, which meant that all the work of drainage was suspended.

The rains had started early that year, and steadily increased. In September storm after storm assailed the City. On the eleventh day of the month it began to rain, and it rained for thirty-six hours without ceasing. The docile camel was again on the rampage. Texcoco overflowed. The whole city was under water. "The Convents were all abandoned," an eye-witness writes, "the churches were all closed. Mass was being said on the rooftops. Business was paralyzed." As usual on such occasions, no food could be brought into the city. In this flood of 1629, thirty thousand Indians lost their lives by drowning, under collapsing buildings or from starvation. Of the twenty-four hundred Spanish families who lived in the city, two thousand fled to Puebla.

It was the worst flood of all. Only the Viceroyal (today the National) Palace, the Houses of the Archbishop, the street that was then called Santa Teresa and is today Avenida de Guatemala, remained above water. Here, all the dogs of the city took refuge. For a long time afterwards this part of the city was called "The Island of The Dogs."

The flooded streets were soon filled with boats, since they were the only possible means of transportation. With each hour the extent of the catastrophe grew worse. Piteful cries for help came from beneath the debris of crumpled houses, while people tried to help those who were trapped. But the disaster grew to such proportions that even succor had to be abandoned. Only the priests and monks went on trying to reach the dying, at least to administer the last Sacraments to them.

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When the flood at last subsided, an angry committee of citizens went to see the Viceroy and demanded that Enrico Martínez be released from prison, and that he be put back to work. Frightened by the events the Viceroy agreed to this demand.

However, it was not the only time that poor Enrico Martínez was clapped into jail for his mistakes and then released again after still other subsequent floods, and told to continue his job. It was an interminably long, difficult, expensive and dangerous task. To be nearer to the scene of his work, Martínez went to live in the quiet little town of Cuautitlán. His only recreation was his books, dabbling with chemical experiments, and collecting sundry curious objects.

When he died, the populace of Cuautitlán buried him with great pomp and ceremony. Appropriately long speeches were made, and an elaborate program was arranged in honour of his memory. And yet, when scarcely a dozen years later a group of civic-minded citizens of Mexico City went to look for his grave, so as to remove his remains to the Capital, no one in Cuautitlán could remember exactly where it had been buried. The only memorial ever offered to him is in the name of a short street in Mexico City; though it is certain that but few of its inhabitants know why a street should be called "Enrico Martínez."

Throughout a long time after his death the work of draining the Valley continued; but it was not until the year 1900 that the Tajo de Nochistongo was completed by an English firm of contractors, Pearson & Son, Ltd. Since then, not content with removing the danger of floods, local authorities have decided to dry up what had remained of Lake Texcoco proper. It was said at the time that the land would be reclaimed for agricultural purposes. The plan failed, because this is the part of the lake whose bed contains salt-

petre, and nothing will grow on it. Subsequently, an experiment was tried, in the hope of solving the problem. A sectional circular structure was built on the lakebed (it can be seen from the air, as it is not far from the Mexico City Airport). This curious structure was designed to extract the salts from the lakebed; but it has failed to produce desired results.

The further draining of the lake has produced, instead, new problems. During the windy months of the year, clouds of dust rise off the Texcoco wastelands and drench the city. Nor has the danger of floods been completely eliminated even today. The floods which now occur during the rainy season, as compared with those of bygone times, are not dangerous. And yet, they paralyze traffic and cause serious losses to downtown commerce. The cause of these floods, however, is attributed to the gradual sinking of the ground level of the city and the consequent deflection of the sewer mains. The sinking of the city, on the other hand, is attributed to the depletion of water-content in its sub-soil, caused by the draining of the Texcoco Lake and the drilling of numerous artesian wells.

Curiously enough, a recent newspaper article suggests that the rainwater which now serves as the immediate cause of the floods, should be in some way caught, stored and pumped into the subsoil, and thus replenish the shortage. The idea indeed sounds somewhat fantastic; but so was the idea behind the task which removed ninety square miles of water from the surface of the Valley of Anahuac.

This city may yet some day definitely rid itself of the peril of floods.

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